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THE NEW SUPER

THE stage-manager was fagged out. He came hurriedly upon the stage, took off his hat and coat, and threw them to the call-boy, who hung them on an electric light bracket. Then he drew a deep breath and looked about him.

It was a fearfully hot morning; no one seemed in the humour for work, the stage was in semi-darkness, the smell of the burning size was almost intolerable, and the crowd of supers who were now to begin learning their "business" for the forthcoming spectacular piece looked anything but intelligent to the calculating eyes of the stage-manager.

He sat astride his chair and faced the men who were waiting instructions. Such a sorry, shabby lot they looked—did anyone ever see such woeful old hats, or such greenish, greasy coats as they wore—and each man to his fellow bore the strange resemblance that clean shaven men usually do to one another.

The stage-manager snapped his fingers to attract attention.

"Now then, the opening scene! Beginners, please."

The supers began walking up and down the stage, laughing, shaking hands, slapping each other on the shoulder, button-holing each other in a dull, mechanical manner.

"Stop!" cried the stage-manager. "Stop, that won't do!"

The men were motionless in an instant.

"I should like you to understand, if you can," he went on, "that you are all"—here he ran his malicious light-blue eyes over the group—"supposed to be men of good position, in the best of society, walking in a fashionable street amusing yourselves, meeting, talking, and so on. Have you got that into your heads?"

The men murmured assent—at least the stage-manager regarded the murmur in that light.

"Well," he continued grimly, "you will oblige me—I pay you for it, remember; this isn't a charitable institution, you know—you will oblige me by trying to follow my instructions. This is the cue: 'Now do your worst—go!' See?"

The men began again the weary business of posing as gentlemen in good positions.

"Now then, now then!" the manager jumped upon his chair in order to obtain a better view. "Great Scott!" he groaned. "For goodness' sake, look as if you were alive! Spread about a little, can't you? Smile and open your mouths; don't look as if you had stepped out of a waxwork show!

"Don't go about there, Williams, as if you had paralysis and D.T.'s mixed. Edwards, you're sneaking round there at the back like a pickpocket. Come out of that corner, you new fellows! Dress the stage, I tell you! You're all together like a lot of sardines in a box! Run through that business again."

Again and again the men went through the scene till the manager raised his hand in sign of dismissal.

"Next act!" called the stage-manager.

Then he read three names aloud, and in answer three tall men stepped upon the stage.

The stage-manager motioned with his lead pencil for them to stand in line and then examined them critically.

"You'll do," he said to the tallest and most stalwart of the three, "you other two are not quite up to height, you may go."

The man selected stood listening to the stage-manager's directions attentively. He was a tall old fellow, with a fine face that seemed to have a story in it. It was easy to see that he had once occupied a good social position.

"What did you say your name was?" asked the manager.

"Hol——"

The man stopped abruptly and hesitated; then he continued:

"Parker, sir."

"Harker, eh? Speak up."

"Parker, sir," answered the man in a slightly louder tone.

A titter ran through the line of supers; the new man was being put through his facings. They remembered their own experience and enjoyed seeing another go through it.

"Now, then, Parker," said the manager, "you are to play the flunkey. Your part isn't very heavy—not much 'fat' in it—you've only got two words to say. You enter on the O.P. side—opposite prompt side—and announce 'Lady Claudia' that's the lot. You will take as your cue this sentence. 'Call my carriage.' from the leading lady. You see her over there in the hat with the pink feathers in it. You come in, say 'Lady Claudia,' bow, and make your exit up stage, walking backwards."

"Yes, sir," said Parker, looking a little mystified.

He turned his head in the direction in which the stage-manager had jerked the point of his pencil—towards the leading lady.

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As Parker's eyes fell upon her, she paused in her animated conversation with the principal actor and half turned her face in the direction of the new super, without, however, noticing him.

Parker stared at her for a moment as if unable to believe his eyes; then his face went as white as a sheet and he staggered back like one who has received a blow.

"What's the matter with the man?" exclaimed the stage-manager appealing to no one in particular. "What's

He sat astride his chair.

the matter with you, man? Had too much to drink so early as this? By the look of your clothes I should say you haven't been able to muster enough to get a breakfast, to say nothing of drink!"

The man's white face flushed at these words.

He drew himself up and intimated with a gesture that he was ready to perform the not too heavy part assigned to him.

"Very good. Take up your cue, watch for it, pay attention."

Parker stood at the wings.

The call-boy—who, by the way, was a man—passed him once or twice and looked at his white, drawn face.

"Poor beggar! I am dashed if he don't look half-starved," he muttered.

The next time he passed he beckoned the new super to a dark corner, and held out a can of beer to him.

"Take a pull at this, father," said the man, with an encouraging jerk of his sandy head. "Do, mate, it'll do yer good."

The elderly super shook his head and stared in front of him vacantly.

"Wot, you won't have it? You ain't frightened of a drop of four 'alf makin' yer forget that heavy part of yours? I can't think what made yer take on this job. Was yer ever in a theatre before—straight?"

"No," returned the new super sadly.

"Couldn't get another job, I s'pose? Well, you ain't got the makin's of a star, an' the sooner you get an easier job the better."

The call-boy again held out the can, and the man suddenly took it and drank a few mouthfuls.

"'Ere, 'ave a drop more! Why, you ain't 'ad enough yet to wet yer whistle! That's right,"—as the new super took the can once more—"it'll sharpen you up." And off he went to the property room.

"Parker," shouted the stage-manager, "Mr. S's entrance. Watch for your cue."

Mr. S. entered, the lady with the pink feathers entered a few seconds later; she and Mr. S. began mumbling to each other up stage.

Suddenly the lady of the pink feathers raised her voice, and said:

"Call my carriage!"

"Parker, your cue!" shouted the stage-manager.

"Yes," said Parker, speaking in a dazed manner.

His eyes were fixed on the leading lady, but he made no attempt to go through his part.

"Your cue, man, your cue!" shouted the stage-manager, red in the face.

Parker stood stupidly, and as if they were speaking in a strange language. The other supers made signs to him to go on the stage, but he did not move.

The stage-manager bounded from his chair.

"Get on the stage, I tell you," he cried, and he put his hands on the man's shoulders and pushed him into position. "Now you, sir, remember your cue for the future."

Those who were near saw him flush a dull red, and his hands clenched, but he straightened himself in an instant, announced "Lady Claudia," turned his back to the footlights, and went off the stage in that manner when he should have bowed himself backward.

There was a hush in the theatre, the stage-manager got up slowly, and ran his fingers through his hair.

He was not a hard man by any means this stage-manager, he would do a good turn for anyone; as he said himself, "he'd never see a poor beggar want," but on the stage he was a martinet, and unless people were bright and smart he used bad language—without it, he said, bullock driving and stage management were impossible; besides, it was his living. He had a hard task master himself, one who expected all and forgave nothing—he had his public to please.

"Parker!" he yelled. "Come back!"

"Yes, sir."

"Take hold of my hand."

He held out a beringed hand that might have been a woman's, and the old man took it stupidly.

"Give the cue," said the stage manager.

"Call my carriage!" shouted the prompter.

The stage-manager and Parker walked on the stage, hand in hand, step by step they came.

"Now bow, bow, bow, I tell you!"

Together the two men bent their backs.

"Now—'Lady Claudia.' Say it after me," said the stage-manager.

"Lady Claudia," echoed Parker mechanically, and in a tone that indicated how distant were his thoughts.

He was looking fixedly at the leading lady, who, with a slight flush on her cheeks, was returning his gaze with an expression of mingled haughtiness and contempt.

"Now get off the stage and do it yourself," said the stage-manager. "I see I've got to teach you like one of the pantomime children. Now, sir, again, again, again!"

Poor Parker went over the entrance, the announce-

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ment, the bowing himself out, till even the brow-beaten supers sympathised with him. But Parker himself went through the performance more like a senseless machine than a human being.

"To-morrow at ten, we will resume this interesting study," said the stage-manager, "and those who have cues, see that you take them up."

Parker went out with the rest of the supernumeraries, but he declined their offers to take a drink with them and moved off slowly in the opposite direction.

When they were out of the narrow street, he turned and hastily retraced his steps towards the stage-door, stopping a few paces from it.

A few minutes afterwards he saw the leading lady emerge from the door and he followed her at a short distance.

He maintained this respectful distance until she entered a side street which had a dead wall on each side for half its length. Then he quickened his steps, caught her up and touched her on the shoulder.

She turned with a start, and, on seeing who it was, uttered an exclamation of anger and recoiled.

"Don't shrink from me, Amy!" pleaded the new super. "I wish to say a few words to you."

"I will have nothing to do with you. Why do you come near me to disgrace me? Have you not brought enough trouble already on your daughter? Go away!"

It was Parker's turn to shrink back. For a moment he covered his face with his hands, while Amy, taking advantage of this, turned to hurry away.

Aroused by the movement, Parker dropped his hands and stopped her once more.

"Amy, I swear that I went to the theatre by accident and not to follow you. I did not know you were there; I have not heard of you for so long. I am starving and that was the only chance I had of earning a shilling or two. Now that I have met you, I ask you to help me."

The woman shut her lips tightly and shook her head.

"You married my mother and then despised her because she was not of the same station as yourself, and you drove her away by your harsh treatment to do the best she could for herself and me."

"I did not. It was an ill-fated union; I was infatuated with her and she married me for my position. I tried to raise her up to it, but she took to drink and disgraced me in the eyes of everyone. Then I failed in my speculations, and she taunted me because I had come down in the world. Then she left me. Heaven knows I would not have said this—I would have respected the memory of the dead—but your cruel words forced it from me."

"That is your view," sneered the leading lady, her tone and manner savouring of the theatre. "If you had done what you ought, I should have been well brought up—I should have been a lady in high society, instead of acting on the stage of a cheap theatre. Have I anything to thank you for?"

"Had your mother left you with me," said Parker earnestly, "I would have done my best for you, but I seldom knew anything of her and I never knew where she left you. I saw your mother only from time to time, when she wished to get money from me, and then she would track me by bothering my relatives for my address until they gave it to her in order to get rid of such a woman. It was not until you were grown up that I saw you again, and then you would not come near me."

"It's all false; another of your trumped-up stories to cover your own doings. You talk of bringing disgrace! How long have you been out of prison? Who stole the pocket-book with the bank notes?"

"I swear by everything sacred that I did not steal it!" said Parker vehemently. "I have said enough against your mother, and I have no wish to say any more. We were found together near the house of the relative from whom it was stolen—he had foolishly placed it on the hall table and forgotten it. They said that I had incited her to take it, but I had only just met her, and, seeing the book in her hand, had wrested it from her in order to restore it. Your mother was let off because she was ill; she died, so they tell me, just before my trial came on and I was sent to penal servitude."

Amy had listened with her lips curled in contemptuous disbelief.

"It's false, every word of it! It is all of a piece with the other things you have done. You have never been a father to me, and I won't have you disgracing me now. Do you hear? If you keep that place as super at the theatre, I'll make your life a misery to you! Mark my words, for when I say a thing I mean it!"

"Take a pull at this, father," said the man.

Then, without another look at the wretched man, she hurried away.

Parker sat down on the kerb and wept. His mind went back over the story, the evidence of which was written so plainly on his features; an ill-starred marriage

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"That is your view," sneered the leading lady.

with one of inferior social standing, an uneducated woman whose head was turned by fortune and who took to drink, a woman fair to look upon, but bad at heart; loss of fortune, followed by the degradation of prison for an act of which he was innocent.

He had struggled to keep above water since he had been liberated, but to-day's experience—the indignity to which he had been subjected at the hands of the stage-manager and the interview with his daughter—were too hard to bear. He

---

"Hallo! Wot, ain't yer got nothin' to do but sit on the kerb an' snivel?"

It was the voice of the call-boy. He shook the old man gently and helped him to get up.

"'Ere, you come along with me and 'ave something to eat."

The rehearsal was in full swing next morning. In the orchestra they were playing softly. The supers were resting while the principals gabbled through their parts.

The stage-manager darted up now and then, and ran round them like a sheep-dog, finding fault, suggesting, grouping them afresh as the fancy took him. The scene progressed till the cue was given by the leading lady.

"Call my carriage!"

No one took up the cue. Everyone was at a standstill.

"That's Parker's cue. Parker! Parker! Where's Parker?" called the stage-manager. "Anyone seen him this morning?"

"I've seen him," said the call-boy.

"What's the matter with him? Why isn't he here?"

"He told me yesterday," continued the call-boy, "that if 'e didn't turn up this morning, the leading lady would explain why."

The stage-manager looked from one to another in bewilderment.

"But you said you had seen him this morning," he said angrily to the call-boy.

"So I 'ave," was the quiet reply. "I didn't like the appearance of him yesterday, so I went this morning to the place where he 'ad a bed."

"Well, what's wrong? Why doesn't he come?" inquired the stage-manager.

"'Cos he's dead. He killed himself yesterday afternoon after the rehearsal!"

GEORGE KNIGHT.

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How Mr. Nicholson Mislaid the Baby.

MRS. NICHOLSON was standing in a dubious attitude, with the study door half-open, and her eyes turning from the quiet figure in the armchair by the table, to another open door in the passage behind her, through which she could see a flood of sunshine, and in the sunshine a cradle.

"I don't feel quite easy," she said, "I am so afraid she should cry and no one hear her. I wish I had not let nurse go out; but all you have to do," coming into the room and speaking impressively, "all you have to do is to ring the bell violently—violently, remember—for cook. For Heaven's sake, John," leaning on the table and stretching out a pretty hand to attract her husband's attention, "look up, or speak, or answer me, or you will drive me mad."

"What is it all about, Agatha?"

The calm, placid, intelligent face opposite was lifted gently, and the thin finger was slipped on to the page to mark a pause.

"It is baby, John," said Mrs. Nicholson in a faltering voice, and with idle, angry tears rolling down her cheeks. "Here have I, for the last ten minutes, been begging and imploring of you to remember baby; not to nurse her, I wouldn't trust you, but only to ring the bell if she cries."

"Does that stop her? It seems simple enough. I think even I could do that."

But Mrs. Nicholson shook her head, still weeping.

"You may laugh at me or sneer if you like. If it were my own baby I would say nothing, I would bear it all; but Emmy's!"

With a patient sigh the gentleman at the writing-table pushed the book away, and lost his place. He looked at her in a bewildered way.

"What is it Agatha? a baby! oh, Emmy's baby, of course."

"And not one half, one hundredth, one thousandth part as valuable in your eyes," broke in Agatha, with impetuosity, "as the smallest, the most unknown, the most undiscovered star. You need not tell me; I know it."

"Of course," frowning gently, "everyone knows that a star, hower small—stars are not famous according to their size, my dear—is of infinitely more value than one hair of a baby's head. I mean," hastily, "speaking from the entirely scientific point of view; but as you were saying, were you not," a little doubtfully, "something about that unfortunate babe of Emmy's?"

Mrs. Nicholson had dried her eyes, and was confronting him in all the cool splendour of her summer's dress, and with all the calm determination of a woman who has made up her mind.

"Yes, I was," she said; "only, once for all, John, if you call it a babe, I will leave your house at once, and never, never come back; and if you call it unfortunate, I will take that hateful MS. with me and burn it at the kitchen fire. If it were yours," with impassioned irony, "it might indeed be described as unfortunate; but Charles is the best of fathers, and he has always been the best of husbands."

"Yes, yes, of course, my dear. I said nothing against Charles; I did not know we were talking about him. We can finish him up to-night," cheerfully. "If that is all, you had better go out now, w'ilst it is fine," turning his eyes to the dazzling sunlight for an instant, and then back to his blotted page. "You can tell me about Charles, you know, when you come in. The best of husbands! I don't know much about them, I fear, but I know a little about the best of wives."

He rose, and laid his hand on the long, slender, soft grey glove that was lying with determination on his neat manuscript. The grey glove closed round his hand gently and clung to him, almost as if it were loth to leave the thin worn fingers; but he patted it gently and laid it aside.

Mrs. Nicholson gave a faint sigh, but when she spoke again, she spoke with less decision and more pleading.

"It is not Charles, indeed it is not; it is the baby. Nurse has gone out, and I have put her cradle in the morning-room, by the window. John," suddenly, "are you listening? What did I say last?"

"The morning-room, Agatha."

"Well," with a sigh of relief, "I see you are taking it in, and forgetting those horrible stars; and how you can compare a star to a baby," parenthetically, "is past me."

"I am sure I never did," he said gently.

"Well, don't interrupt me, John, or I shall never get out. What was I saying? Oh, baby is in the morning-room, and if she cries—makes *one* sound—you are to ring your bell—*this* bell, John—for cook; do you understand?"

"Yes, I believe so. I am to ring the bell—*this* bell—for cook."

"Oh, I *hope* you will," after a pause. "Fancy," her

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eyes filling with tears again, "if she cried, and no one heard her! Oh, John, you will not deceive me? You will try—and—ring?"

"My dear," speaking with some dignity, "surely I am not utterly destitute of common humanity or common sense. I have interesting work here," pointing to the manuscript and the books of reference heaped around him; "but I suppose, after all, I am human."

"Oh, I *hope* so, I *think* so," cried Agatha, clasping her hands; "only you might not hear her, that was all I meant."

"Then, I think," he said, with a gently sarcastic smile, "that you may dismiss your fears; they are quite groundless."

"Very well," said Agatha, moving in a hesitating way to the door. "I am satisfied, I am trying to be satisfied; don't forget."

"No," cheerfully, "I will take a leaf from Charles's book, the best of husbands."

"Oh,"—the grey glove had closed on the handle of the door, but released it again—"the Paynters are coming to-night, so you must not go out star-gazing."

"All right," obediently; "good-bye."

"Good-bye."

The bright face, that had almost disappeared round the door, came back again, and leant against the worn velveteen of the astronomer's coat; for a minute the lips were pressed to it, then lifted.

"Kiss me, John; you are a dear old fellow after all, and I am a fiend."

The sunshine seemed to leave the room with the sweet bright presence, and hover over the pretty cradle, amongst the sounds and scents of the midsummer day. In the library there was only one shaft of light that came through the high windows, and fell across the old velveteen coat, and the tidy manuscripts, and the open books, and left the handsome, clever, refined face in shadow.

It might have been two hours afterwards—painful after events created a confusion in Mr. Nicholson's mind, and the two hours might have been two days—when he became aware of a laugh in the passage by the door.

His hand had grown tired with writing, but the pen travelled steadily on; his eyes had grown a little tired, and it was a relief to raise them for a minute to the locked door, behind which he heard the laugh. He rose, with a half-smile on his grave face, and paused, struck by a sudden presentiment.

Something came back to him, as he stood in the dull light of the dull room; was it a dream, or a memory, or was it—the baby? He pushed his papers hurriedly away and walked over to the door, and unlocked it, throwing it wide open.

There was nothing in the passage but the yellow sunlight now upon the walls and on the old prints, and Mrs. Nicholson standing in her pretty grey dress, with her slim hands stretched out, and the laugh that had disturbed him still upon her lips.

In the room beyond there was more sunlight and the cradle.

"John," cried Mrs. Nicholson, laughing again as if she could not help it, "what have you done with her? Give her to me. You are earning your title to the best of husbands."

He looked up in quick perplexity.

"What is it, Agatha? What do you want? I have nothing to give you."

"Oh don't, John," she cried impatiently, "don't tease! I want baby."

"Well"—the same perplexed look creeping over his face, and softening its sternness—"take her," stretching out his hand to the cradle in the sunlight.

Agatha's eyes were turned on him for a minute with a look of contempt before which he positively quailed. Then she swept over to the cradle, and tossed out the little pillow, and the sheets with their lace edges, and the pale-blue satin coverlet on to the floor in a soft heap, and stood looking down upon the empty cradle as if she would conjure up the pink face and the flaxen head into their accustomed place.

Mr. Nicholson had followed her on tiptoe, and was stirring the softly shining heap on the floor with his patent-leather shoes, as if he half-imagined that she had tossed the baby out amongst them.

"Well?" said Agatha sharply.

"Well?" he echoed feebly.

"Do you mean to say," she said, putting aside her angry vehemence and speaking tearfully, with her grey eyes turned up to his, "Oh, John, do you mean to say that you have lost her?"

"I never touched her," he cried hastily, "I never—" heard her he would have added, but again the faint memory—that dream—stirred him. "Upon my honour, Agatha," he said abruptly, leaning down into the cradle and poking at the mattress with his thin fingers, "upon my honour, I can't remember."

"You can't remember," said Agatha with slow scorn. "Why, John she roared! Cook heard her in the kitchen. She came rushing up and found the cradle empty, and baby gone; she thought you had taken her into the study, she told me so; but, oh, John, it was somebody else, and they have stolen her!"

"My dear," he said, shaking himself together, and speaking more lightly, "who would steal her?—a baby *roaring*, as you say!" He shuddered. "Why, surely no one in his senses would do such a thing!"

"Emmy's baby!" cried Agatha tearfully, "and that is how you speak of her! Oh, John, dear John, think again; didn't you hear her? Perhaps you have forgotten—perhaps you have put her somewhere, and she has gone to sleep. Sit down, John, and think—perhaps you have put her somewhere and forgotten."

Mr. Nicholson sat down on the window-sill, and covered his face with his hands. He tried to think, but whenever he concentrated his mind on the baby he was dimly conscious of that fading fancy that he could not grasp—that dream of a cry.

It had disturbed him, he remembered, that loud, painful, jarring cry, but it had died away; surely it had died into peace without (?) interference?

"Agatha," he said, lifting up his face, sharpened with the effect of thought, "I *do* remember *something*—somebody crying; it must have been the babe."

"Yes," said Agatha eagerly, "go on! you heard her! that is right—cook says you must have heard her, she roared so—well, and then? You——"

"I—I can't remember, Agatha. I may have gone on writing, that seems the most likely, I think; but I may have gone to the door. No," shaking his head, "I can't get beyond the cry. I *do* remember that now, distinctly."

"Perhaps," said Agatha hopefully, through her tears, "you have put her somewhere in the library. What have you been doing or using this afternoon?"

Mr. Nicholson followed humbly as she swept in before him, and flung open the great curtains, so that the light rushed in on to his table strewed with plans and MS. Even then he spread out his hands, almost unconsciously,

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to defend his precious papers from her light scornful touch; but she stood in the centre of the room, looking into every corner with her quick, soft eyes.

"What have you used, John—this chair? You have not been to the cupboard? No," peeping into a dark recess, musty with papers. "What else?"

"Nothing else, Agatha, here, except," with a quick smile, "the waste-paper basket, and that is empty. You can see for yourself."

"Ah," said Agatha, "here is cook," as a heavy breathing became audible in the passage. "Cook," her voice trembling at sight of the sympathetic face, "your master has not seen the baby—at least, he thinks not. He was very busy, but he heard her cry, and he may have taken her up and forgotten. We are looking for her."

"Which you won't never find her, then," said cook in a broken voice. "In my last place but one, where I was general cleaner in Mrs. 'All's family, there was a child disappeared, as it might be this, and it was never found—gipsies or not, it was never come across again."

"Oh don't, cook!" cried Agatha plaintively. "And Emmy coming this evening! Your master thinks he may have put her somewhere and forgotten. He remembers hearing her."

"Which he might," said cook, "not being deaf. Which I don't mean no disrespect, sir, but she was roaring awful; and I says to Mary, says I, 'Master'll never know 'ow to quiet that child, so I'll run up and bring her down a bit;' and I stops to change my apron, and I ups as it might be here, and the cradle, as it might be there, and no sound and the cradle as empty as it is at this minute."

Cook turned dramatically, and pointed one stout arm to the little cradle in the sunlight.

Mrs. Nicholson's tearful eyes followed the hand, and her husband stood uneasily in the centre of the group, with an anxious frown upon his face.

"Which," added cook scornfully, "I think a baby—and such a one, bless her—is of more vally than all this rubbish."

She waved her hand over the table, on which lay the neat MS. and the rows of mended pens; and Mr. Nicholson moved instinctively a step backwards, as if she had an evil eye and his writings would shrivel up at her scornful gesture.

"Cook," said Mrs. Nicholson with dignity, marred a little by a quaver in her voice, "you don't understand. Your master is very clever and his writings are of great value. Of course," with a pleading look upwards, "baby is our first thought just now. There are no wild beasts here so she cannot be eaten. But she has gone, and before Emmy comes this evening she must be found."

"Of course she must," said her husband, plucking up courage from her exceeding gentleness. "We will begin systematically, and go through every room in the house."

So the search began, that ended, an hour later, in the great hall with three perplexed faces meeting each other at the foot of the stairs, in a silence that Mrs. Nicholson broke.

"It's no use, John, I cannot bear it any longer. She is lost."

She flung out her empty hands with a despairing gesture, but her husband caught and held them.

"Don't give up, Agatha; it will all come right. If I search the world through I will find her."

"Or the body," said cook.

Mrs. Nicholson shuddered.

The minute's silence was broken by a sound of merry laughter and the trampling of feet. For a minute Agatha raised her head, listening intently, and then she drooped it with a sigh.

"It is only the rectory boys, John," she said; "they have been in the hayfield all day, and I asked them to tea. I can't speak to them, I am too anxious."

She would have moved away, but the noise and laughter were in the hall already, and the boys were stumbling up towards her in the darkness, over the rugs and skins. Something white was being shoved from one to the other, and was pushed into Agatha's arms at last and held there by a pair of rough sunburnt hands.

"What is it? Oh, Jack, what is it?" she cried, bending down and kissing, to their owner's great surprise, the boy's rough hands.

"Don't, I say," said Jack, drawing them away with a curious shamefaced look. "It's only the baby, Mrs. Nicholson. She was crying in the cradle so I just got in and bagged her. She's been playing in the hay; she nearly got jabbed with a rake, but Jim got it instead. She's a jolly little thing. Did you miss her?"

"Yes, I thought she was lost," said Agatha gently.

"Lost!" with a roar of laughter. "Well, that is good! May we wash our hands for tea? I'm not so dirty, I've been ho'ding her; but Jim's simply mud all over. Here, have you got her? it's so dark I can't see."

The turbulent tide swept away into the dim distance of stairs and passages, leaving a little group in the twilight of the hall; a tall dark figure, against which a golden head was leaning, and two arms with a white bundle folded in them.

"Kiss her, John," came a soft voice out of the darkness. "I know you would rather not, she's only a baby, not a star; but just as a punishment, because you were so stupid."

The tall figure stooped, and laid a dark moustache against the little bundle.

"She's very soft," said another voice; "I don't think I ever knew so much about a baby before."

There was, after a moment's silence, a movement on the man's part, as though he were drawing himself up to his full height, with a view to reasserting his dignity. He cleared his throat.

"After all, Agatha," he said stiffly, "I did not lose the baby."

"I never said you did," said Agatha; "I only asked you, and you *couldn't remember*."

"Another time," with an evident effort, "I suppose I shall be condemned unheard."

"Another time!" scornfully. "You may set your mind at rest. Neither I nor Emmy is in the least likely to trust you again, at least not with anything of value."

"Then how about the baby?" with a laugh.

"That," said Agatha firmly, "includes the baby."

G. B.

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Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

XXVIII.—HE TRIES AGAIN TO LEARN CYCLING.

WHILE the Bowsers were eating dinner the other evening a package was left at the door, and as they adjourned from the table to the family sitting-room Mr. Bowser opened it and brought forth a sweater, a pair of knee breeches, a belt, and a pair of bicycle shoes and stockings.

"Who are they for?" asked Mrs. Bowser as he displayed the articles with a smile of satisfaction.

"They won't fit you, and I didn't buy them for the cook," he replied.

"But if they are for you, what on earth do you want with them? Three different times within the last two years have you almost killed yourself trying to ride a bike. You will never be able to do it if you live to be a thousand years old."

"Won't I? And why not, please? Am I the only person in the United Kingdom who can't learn to ride a bicycle?"

"You—you are too fat," she protested—"too fat and your legs are too short. You are what they call clumsy. I don't say it to hurt your feelings, but you——"

Ten minutes later he came down rigged out as a Zephyr.

"Exactly, Mrs. Bowser," he interrupted, "I understand your motive. You don't want to hurt my feelings, but you want to convey the impression that I'm an old rhinoceros on wheels or an elephant on skates. I thank you very much and will remember it of you!"

"But you have tried the bike and been almost killed."

"In a careless, casual way I have tried the bike. I tried it as a novelty, and not for my health. I had no interest or ambition It made no difference to me whether I ran up a tree or over a horse and cart. My failures were not failures. I simply fell off the bike and stayed off."

"And is it your health this time?" she asked.

"Purely a question of health, Mrs. Bowser. I am going to ride the bike to save the doctor's and chemist's bills. Brown has kindly volunteered the use of his machine, and I have joined the Zephyr club. We take our first spin this evening. Each spin saves a doctor's bill. Have you anything more to say?"

"Nothing more."

"Then I will go upstairs and get into this suit."

Ten minutes later he came down rigged out as a Zephyr. Mrs. Bowser was annoyed and perturbed, but when she caught sight of him she had to laugh. It was as if a bicycle suit had been put on a beer barrel.

The cat came in from the back yard and took one look at the Zephyr and then made a dive under the sofa.

"Something seems to appeal to your sense of humour," sternly remarked Mr. Bowser as he sat down to put on his shoes.

"I was thinking of Zephyrs," replied Mrs. Bowser as she choked back a laugh.

"Very kind of you, and you shall be rewarded in due time. I might have known just how you would act about it. Whenever the question of my health comes up, you are so determined and obstinate that only one conclusion can be reached. You long to be a widow."

"I hadn't heard that there was anything wrong with your health."

"And why hadn't you? Simply because I am one of those men who can suffer for years and years and never make a complaint. If I should tell you what the doctor told me the other day, you'd be astonished. Perhaps it will be news to you to hear that I have been on the edge of the grave for the last three years."

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"But now you are going to get away from the edge?"

"I am."

"By running your bike into a kerbstone and being sprawled all over the footpath."

"By thunder, woman," shouted Mr. Bowser as he sprang up and danced round, "do you want to aggravate me till I do something desperate? When did I ever sprawl all over the footpath? I understand your motive in seeking to discourage me, but the plan won't work. I shall go out on the bike for a spin. As a member of the Zephyr club I shall be at the front. I will ride and ride and ride. I will not only ride for the sake of my health, but I will gambol round to have revenge on you. Every evening for the next three months—for the next three years, ten years—I will take a ten mile spin."

Mrs. Bowser sighed, but said no more. He had no sooner left the house than she looked about to see that there were brandy, camphor, hartshorn and mustard in the house.

Brown was waiting with the bicycle at the gate, and he said to Mr. Bowser:

"You have a quarter of an hour yet before the club meets, and you'd better practise up a little. Come round the corner and ride up and down a few times. You've ridden before, haven't you?"

"A few times."

When they had turned the corner and were out of sight of the house, Mr. Bowser made his beginning. He had heard an old rider say that confidence was half the battle. He summoned all his confidence and jumped into the saddle.

After a good deal of clawing he got one pedal, but the other kept out of his way, and the bike wobbled and dodged about and finally banged into the kerb and sent the rider over the handle bar.

Brown looked at him dubiously as he got up and rubbed his bruises, but Mr. Bowser was full of grit.

"I'm a little out of practice," he said in explanation, "but I shall be all right in five minutes. You don't think I'm too fat, do you? Mrs. Bowser says I'm too fat and my legs are too short, but I'll show her before I've finished. Lemme try again."

"Take her right out in the middle of the street and resolve to conquer or die. When you once get on, keep your head."

After two or three vain efforts Mr. Bowser reached the saddle again, and, to his intense surprise, his feet struck the pedals and he was off. A bike sometimes does this in its eccentricity.

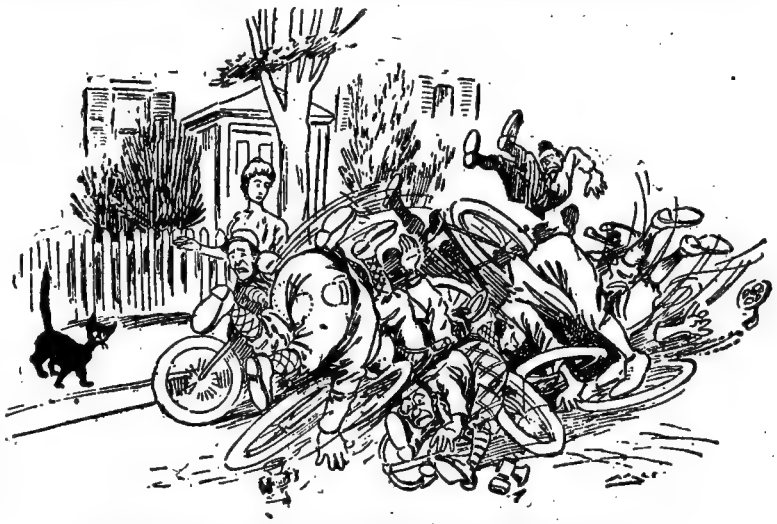
If he had been left to himself, he might have wobbled and twisted the length of a terrace and banged up against a milestone at the corner, but he had not gone a hundred feet when the sixteen members of the Zephyr club came round the corner. Brown yelled and Bowser yelled.

When the sixteen Zephyrs saw something wobbling all over the street, they also yelled, but the yelling did no good. Mr. Bowser tried to fall off or jump off or get off, but six or seven festive riders struck him in chorus and with exceeding unanimity, and what Brown saw was a dark cloud hovering over the street with human bodies and parts of broken wheels ascending and descending and whirling round. Mrs. Bowser and the cat arrived before the performance was over. As they watched the cloud it separated and men and women limped to the kerb and sat down. Mr. Bowser was left alone among the wrecked machines. He was lying on the broad of his back, and the look on his face was like that of a man being burnt alive at the stake.

They picked up the body and carried it along and lugged it into the house, and as they backed out they said to Mrs. Bowser:

"His heart beats yet, and you may possibly save him, but if you do he should be confined in a lunatic asylum all the rest of his days. A man like him is a danger to the whole town and should not be allowed to run at large."

M. QUAD.



Mrs. Bowser and the cat arrived before the performance was over.

[Next Week: "Things were all wrong, but he righted them."]

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The Ace of Clubs.

"DICK, this is one of your early nights, isn't it?" asked his wife as he kissed her and the two children prior to leaving home for the office.

"Yes, dear. Why?"

"Because we—the children and myself—see so little of you now that you have under aken this extra work. When you used to come home early, we had some happy evenings together, but it is often eleven o'clock now before you return, and even when you reach home to dinner, you seem so preoccupied that you do not care to talk. We have lost the Saturday afternoon, and on Sunday you are generally too tired or worried to take any interest in the children."

It was out at last. The absence and preoccupation of her husband had worried Kate for a long time, but she had hesitated to say anything to him on the subject.

He had undertaken this extra work for a city friend, as he had told her, for the express pur ose of increasing their income and making things more comfortable for his wife and family, so it seemed rather ungrateful on her part to make any protest; but his salary was a very good one and she would have been quite content with their original position—she would have preferred it to seeing him with that anxious look.

As a matter of fact, this work had not been very profitable hitherto, but Dick was always telling her that it would be all right later on.

"Now, Kate," said Dick reproachfully.

"Yes, I know what you are going to say," interrupted Kate gently. "But we were more—well, quite as happy in the old days. And you know," she c ntinued hesitatingly, "this new venture, or partnership, or whatever you may call it, has not really brought in much money."

"Very few businesses are profitable in that sense at the commencement," Dick reminded her. "It is like laying up something for a rainy day; we shall reap the benefit later on."

"I hope so, Dick," said his wife with a sigh. "We are not laying up anything just now out of your salary; our expenses and the money you require for the development of this business are eating it all up. I sometimes wonder, when I see you looking so anxious, whether the future result will be worth the present cost."

Dick laughed. He tried to make it sound like a hearty laugh, but it was not a grand success.

"It's time I went to the office, Kate; you are unstrung this morning and you will make me feel dismal. Remember, I shall be home at six, not later, so try to get into a more cheerful frame of mind before that time and cease worrying about the future."

He kissed her lovingly, lifted the boy "up to the ceiling," stroked the little girl's curly hair and hurried away.

"It would break her heart, I really believe, if she knew what the 'extra work' was," was his self-comment as he strode to the railway station. "Yes, it would do that just as surely as it will drive me mad if I don't make a big haul directly! She speaks of our money all going; she little knows that I am up to my eyes in debt! I *must* win soon or——"

He bought a morning paper and opened it, intending to read it in the train, but though he stared at it during the whole of the journey, he never read a line of its contents. His mind was busy with another subject.

"What on earth made me go to that woman and have my fortune told by cards and palmistry and all that sort of stuff? I suppose it is all bosh, but she hit upon one or two things very correctly and that makes me nervous about her prediction. How should she know that I spend three or four evenings a week at the card table? Let me see—what did she say? 'The ace of clubs will be the trump card on three occasions; on the first two occasions it will bring you more or less bad luck, but the third time it will mean your ruin.'

"Will it come true? It has turned up once, when it swept away a fair amount of money that I had won. In spite of myself, I dread the next time. I watch that card whenever I see it on the table and try to follow it through all the shuffling and dealing. I fall out of the game whenever I think there is a chance that the dealer will turn it up as a trump card and something within me whispers 'leave off playing altogether,' but how can I?"

The question was unanswerable; the gambling spirit, which had taken possession of him some three years previously, had been constantly getting a tighter grip on its victim; he could no more tear himself away than the opium victim can free himself from his besetting habit. To make the severance more difficult, he was saddled with an incubus of debt.

He went home that evening and tried to make his wife happy by joining them in their childish games before the young ones went to bed. At dinner, and after, he threw off his anxiety by a great effort and did his best to make amends for his shortcoming. Kate looked relieved and began to hope that she might induce her husband to confine his enterprise to his usual daily vocation.

The next day was Saturday and, to her delight, Dick promised Kate that he would spend the afternoon at home, although he must run up to the city in the evening to meet his friend. He accompanied her for a stroll in the afternoon, and on their way back they met Dr. Webster.

He was a young medical man established in the neigh-

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bourhood and a friend of the Bartons; rumour said that he had at one time hoped to win Kate, but there was no reliable evidence to confirm the rumour, although the persons who held that view pointed to the fact that Dr. Webster was still unmarried. He had a good practice and had earned reputation far beyond his own district for his skill in cases of insanity and nervous complaints generally.

"You are not looking well, Mr. Barton," said Webster after the usual greetings had been exchanged. "You are working too hard, but don't forget that Nature does not allow anyone to play tricks with her—she is bound to have revenge sooner or later in some form or other. I am afraid that your night work causes too great a mental strain."

Dick Barton shot a swift glance at the speaker and turned his eyes away, making some short rejoinder.

He felt uneasy. He had a suspicion that Webster knew something of his doings, and he trembled lest the doctor should say anything that might betray him. Kate was glad that Webster had emphasised her own assertion and hoped that this double reminder would have its effect.

But her hopes were quickly vanished; her husband's condition and appearance were far worse on Sunday morning.

She took the opportunity to implore him to give up the extra work, but he shook his head and answered her so abruptly that she went to her bedroom to relieve herself by a good cry.

Another portion of the fortune-teller's prophecy had been fulfilled on the Saturday evening; the ace of clubs had turned up most unexpectedly, and once again Dick Barton had left the room a heavy loser.

How he had watched and schemed to avoid this unlucky event. But all to no purpose; the fateful card had suddenly, and when least expected, presented itself to his astonished eyes, and he had lost the little pile of money which he had staked.

Dick Barton's mental condition and physical appearance were pitiful. He dreaded to resume his gambling—dreaded the coming of the evening all through the day, yet he could not keep away from the gaming table. Night after night he went there, staking his money and starting with fear every time the dealer turned up a card; he watched with feverish eyes for the ace of clubs, trying to follow it in all its journeyings, gauging the probabilities and abstaining from a game now and then when he thought that the chances were against him.

Every night for two weeks he went on in this way, becoming more and more nervous until he could scarcely hold his hands still, and the opening of a door near him frightened him as much as the report of a revolver, yet he could not give up. He dared not give up, for his creditors were pressing him and he must get money in some way.

Poor Kate was nearly distracted; her husband seemed to have lost all affection for her and the children, he was absorbed in his work—consumed by it as the miser is by his love of gold. She went in her despair to Dr. Webster for advice, and that gentleman promised to do his best to bring Dick to reason.

With a white, set face that indicated desperation, Dick Barton sat at the table playing for liberty. He had reached the end of his tether; unless he could retrieve his fortunes that evening, disaster could not be averted.

Luck was on his side to all appearance; again and again he won, until he threw aside the prudence with which he had begun and staked the larger and larger sums which his winnings permitted.

But in spite of his fortune he was ill at ease—haunted by the ever-present fear that the ace of clubs would be turned up.

With the usual feverish anxiety rendered more intense by the stress of circumstances, he tried to follow the dreaded card; he was trembling with fear like one stricken with ague, and he started and glared about him at every sound.

The other players noticed this and cast meaning glances at one another under the impression that Barton was not far from an attack of delirium tremens. Once, when a black card was turned up, he sprang to his feet with a groan, but he was recalled to himself by the dealer calling out what the card was.

"Thank Heaven!" he muttered, wiping the cold perspiration from his face. "Just a few pounds more—only a little more! Then I will leave off. I shall have enough to get out of the mess I am in, and I'll never touch another card! Oh, if that awful card will only keep in the background just a little longer!"

This fright served to increase his nervousness, and he presented a truly pitiable spectacle; it made him fearful of risking all his money and he reduced the value of his stakes. He lost twice in succession and then, rendered bold again by a sudden idea that his chance had come, he staked the whole of his money.

When he had done so, he began to repent. What if that card turned up? He gripped the edge of the table with both hands, and watched with parched lips and glassy eyes for the result. In his wretched state of mind, oppressed as he was by the prophecy, it did not occur to him that if he lost, it mattered not which card wrought his ruin.

The seconds seemed hours to the agonized man who was waiting to know his fate. With every second his fears increased. At the critical moment he half-raised himself from his chair and leant forward.

The ace of clubs!

Dick Barton stood bolt upright; he uttered no sound but the onlookers saw a reddish froth about his lips. Then he fell to the floor with a heavy thud.

* * * * *

Three months had passed away and Dick Barton was still in the madhouse. When he recovered consciousness after the seizure on the fatal evening, it was found that his reason had suffered and given way under the strain. He was a docile inmate, generally speaking, but subject to an occasional attack of an extreme character, when he was very violent and raved about the ace of clubs.

Mrs. Barton and her children were being taken care of by her father; they spent part of their time in the old home and the remainder with him. It had been decided to keep on the house for a time in the hope that Dick might recover.

The general opinion was that the chances were against recovery; there was hope, that was true, but it was so slender that it was not wise to calculate on it. Dr. Webster was a little more sanguine than his professional brethren, but he dared not raise hopes in Kate that might not be realised.

He had interested himself in the case of Dick Barton and had secured permission to see him at frequent intervals and study the progress of the malady. He made a point of reporting to Kate after every visit, and Kate herself saw her husband from time to time, sometimes

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being recognised and at others unable to obtain the least sign of recognition from Dick.

This was the position at the end of three months, when Dr. Webster came to Kate with a proposition.

"My dear Mrs. Barton," he said gently and deferentially. "After having given considerable attention to the case I have arrived at the conclusion that probably the only chance of restoring your husband's reason is to try the experiment of treating him homeopathically. He lost his reason as the result of a shock following on great mental strain; we must try the effect of a similar shock as a method of restoring the equilibrium. We cannot reproduce all the conditions exactly, but we will get as near as we can. We all know of cases in which a person has lost his memory through a blow, or in some similar way, and has had it restored by an accident of the same character. But in this instance there is a risk; the shock may kill."

Dr. Webster had spoken impressively; he wished Kate to understand the full importance of his words.

It was a terrible question for a woman to decide—to let her husband remain in mental darkness or to risk his life on the the chance of bringing back the light. She could not make up her mind then and there, but promised to give a decision on the following day.

When Dr. Webster came for the reply, it was in the affirmative.

Webster had made his plans in the expectation that Kate would agree, and he now began the execution of his scheme in conjunction with the medical attendants of the asylum.

Kate had nothing to do, but he stipulated that she should be present when the experiment was made.

The plan was to endeavour to instil into the mind of Dick Barton the idea that he must play at cards; that he must continue to play and stake his winnings, because if he could only hold out until the ace of clubs was turned up his fortune would be made and the disaster of which he was constantly talking would be redeemed tenfold. This was no easy task.

At first, the suggestion was terrifying to Dick, but by dint of continual persuasion it became less and less objectionable and finally he expressed a desire to begin. It took a long time to arrive at this result, but having succeeded so far, the rest of the experiment would be carried out much more quickly, whatever the end might be.

After the first game, Dick showed signs of eagerness; this was a favourable indication, but it was impossible to forecast the effect of the final shock. Dick's eagerness increased as the time went on, and then he began to show some anxiety at the thought that the ace of clubs would never be turned up to bring him good luck.

"It brought me bad luck before and it was not slow in turning up them, but now that it is to bring me good luck it will not turn up."

He watched for that card as he had watched for it a few months previously, but with quite a change of feelings. He longed to see it and felt disappointed every time it failed to appear. As Dr. Webster contrived matters so that it was never the trump card, the patience of Barton began to get exhausted; he became fretful at the delay and the other medical men—for Webster kept well in the background—had to exercise all their powers of persuasion to induce him to continue and to bring about exactly that nervous condition which they desired.

At last the time came when it was deemed advisable to make the culminating experiment. It was evening, the room was arranged and lighted so as to resemble as nearly as possible the gambling saloon in which Barton had spent so many evenings, and proper precautions had been taken in connection with the cards. Kate was present behind a screen, not far from her husband and placed so that she could watch him; Webster was by her side.

Barton had been led to believe that this evening he might expect his fate. Kate could scarcely bear to look upon the excited countenance of her husband, with the lips twitching nervously and with the eyes fixed upon one spot.

More and more intense became the expression upon Dick's face; more and more intense did Kate's feelings become, until she could scarcely stand upright.

"Now!" whispered Webster to Kate, after having given the agreed signal to the other players.

"Now for the final card!" they cried in chorus. Dick sprang to his feet and waited, every limb trembling.

The ace of clubs!

There was a wild cry, more like the howl of a beast than the utterance of a human being. Dick's hands went to his forehead and he reeled.

"Dick, oh Dick!" screamed Kate. She thought the shock had killed him, and she rushed forward and threw her arms about him.

There was an awful silence for a few seconds, as Kate looked pleadingly into the wondering eyes of the man she loved.

Then there came a great sob from his throat, and he sank into the chair with a cry of "Kate! Kate!" covered his face with his hands and wept, while his wife knelt by his side and tried to comfort him.

"Saved!" exclaimed Dr. Webster in a husky voice. "I am glad that I have been able to assist in bringing back happiness to her!" Daisy George.

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A DRAMATIC COINCIDENCE.

"No," he said, "I am decidedly of opinion that a woman,—the average, well-constituted woman—cannot possibly love twice; that is to say, she cannot consistently re-possess herself, for re-giving, of that which she has to all intents and purposes parted with previously, and for ever."

And she agreed with him. How could she help doing so?

She was young, and very much in love, and although a girl with ambitious ideas and dreams, the mere suggestion that her affection (in this instance) was evanescent, made her acquiesce unreservedly in her lover's absolute proposition.

Harold McIvor was a young man with a certain literary reputation. Although looking to story-spinning, and "outside" journalism as a principal source of income, he was emulous of dramatic success. Beyond, however, a couple of one-act pieces, provincially produced, the desire of his heart was as yet ungratified.

He was a man, too, with a fixed idea—a fad it might be called—an almost aggressive opinion. He was an absolute unbeliever in woman as a literary quantity. Lady playwrights were an abomination to him. No woman, he averred, could write a play worthy the name. Woman, he maintained, was created only and solely for man's help, solace, and domestic comfort; as his intellectual equal and competitor she had no place, or ought to have none.

Of course these views brought him, within his limited circle, into frequent collision with its feminine element. Ellaline Drake was certainly an exception, but then, she was in love, and, as love is, as we know, proverbially blind, (even to the obvious, oftentimes), the woman was merged in the partisan.

The young lady held a fairly good position as typist in the Editorial department of a well-known London publishing house.

Of a quick imaginative temperament, her lot was, therefore, cast amid just such surroundings as must almost inevitably lead to the fostering of her mental bent.

Stories had she written by the score—Poetry, pathetic little pictures, wonderfully true to a certain phase of life so difficult of adequate portrayal, the child-existence of the lower human strata.

It was this feature of her published work which had brought her into personal contact with Harold McIvor. He was keen to detect the woman's lovable nature, peeping out of, and bubbling up through the work of "Ella Drake."

I am inclined to believe that implicit mutual confidence existed between them, with, however, one notable reservation.

Harold cherished the dream of future dramatic fame. He made no secret of it, so far as his sweetheart was concerned, and freely discussed with her his hopes, his aspirations and his plans.

On the other hand Ellaline burned to distinguish herself as a playwright.

As yet she had been unsuccessful in obtaining even a managerial hearing, but being a plucky little woman she worked and hoped on.

But she carefully concealed from Harold her ambition and efforts in this direction.

How could she? she said to herself knowing, as she did, his sentiments with regard to female tillers of the dramatic soil.

So she quietly burnt the midnight oil, paling thereby her pretty cheeks, and spoiling, with disfiguring dark rims, those big eyes of hers.

It was the day of the conversation between them upon woman's ability to love twice. In her present frame of mind, nothing was to be expected of Ella save complete agreement with Harold's views.

"You, darling," he said tenderly, "you could never forget or forsake."

Her only answer was the laying of her hand upon his with a gentle pressure.

"You see, dear," he continued, "the world would be almost untenable as a living-place were there no guarantee, as it were, for woman's faith, and loyalty to her engagements."

"Of course, dear, it would," she returned, "I'm sure that I for one shouldn't want to live in it, for if all women were faithless and disloyal, all men would be——be——"

"What?" he asked laughingly.

"Well, I can't exactly explain, but, say—ugly—in their ways I mean."

"I suppose they would, but as you are what you are, and have made me all that I myself am, why, I am content not to worry myself about it, except—on paper."

This talk had for both these young people great issues.

Both saw the possibilities for dramatic treatment of the subject they had been discussing.

Both mentally dec ded to make these same possibilities an accomplished dramatic fact (so far, at least, as the writing of a play on these lines was concerned) and, most momentous of all, both resolved upon absolute secrecy with regard, that is, to each other.

Possibly, had mutual confidence swayed them, much heartburning embarrassment and consequent entanglement might have been spared them, but Harold, held back by a disinclination to impart the extreme views to which his work would undoubtedly commit him was silent; while Ella, naturally apprehensive of offending his literary prejudices, possessed her soul in reserved patience.

It was observable that from the moment each began to work out his and her idea, that a peculiar and at first hardly perceptible constraint sprang up between the pair.

Harold worked early and late. No walks; no visits in company to theatres; no sunny evening excursions to country nooks and corners. "Sported oak" with him was the order of the day.

So, too, with Ella. Her daily employment kept her busy durin. the day, so that the result in her case was night work, with its inevitable consequence—mental and physical exhaustion.

This state of things continued for nearly six months, until one morning, when the street lamps were struggling with the swiftly breaking dawn, Ella typed the last word of her play.

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There was only one title for it, of course, "Her second love," and, as she made it up into a parcel, and addresed it to the Actor-Manager, Imperial Theatre, she did so with, it must be confessed, a half-guilty sense of something she knew not what.

* * * * *

The private room of Athol Fearis, lessee and manager of the Imperial Theatre, was occupied on the morning of the day succeeding that of the dispatch of Ella's MS. by that gentleman himself and his reader.

It is the custom, as many are aware, for most managers, especially those of the great West-End houses, to employ as their readers of submitted plays literary men of some reputation.

That Harold McIvor should fill this responsible position at the "Imperial," was assuredly a strange coincidence, if nothing more, although in itself, it was but the most natural result of a life-long friendship with the actor.

"Only one this morning," remarked Fearis, "I congratulate you. Who's the author, anybody we know?"

"A novice, I think," hurriedly, and somewhat confusedly answers the other, "a Miss—or Mrs. Ella Drake."

"'Um. I know your sentiments, my boy, where the ladies are concerned. But be merciful; be merciful, as you expect mercy. If there is any good in it, give it a chance. What's the subject?"

"So far as I can see at present, Woman's second love, its possibility or otherwise."

"Good! well, tell me all about it to-morrow; if you've digested it by then. I'm off now down to the stage, to rehearse that 3rd-Act scene again with my new leading lady."

It may be just mentioned that the fact of Harold's readership being unknown to Ella was quite understandable, he having strong conscientious scruples with regard to "cleanness of hands," and particularly with reference to such a delicate position.

Harold did not attempt to read the manuscript at the theatre. He placed it in his pocket, and took it home with him.

He was not by any means a man given to plots, conspiracies, or double dealing of any kind, but I am bound to record that his action, after reading Ella's play, might well have been unfavourably construed by many who did not understand him.

He saw the utter, irredeemable badness of Ella's work. Apart from its acting impossibility it was unreadable. Yet he read it; for they were his Ella's words; her thoughts, crude certainly and distorted, but still hers. There was only one judgment for him to pronounce, but it was with a heavy heart that he did so. Then he turned to his desk. Upon it lay a white-wrapped packet, addressed to a prominent London actor.

Deliberately did he break the seal and remove the typed MS. It was his own play, and the title ran "Her second love."

They lay upon the desk before him side by side, the two creations of two brains. Twin children outwardly, although there the likeness ended.

He knew, as every good craftsman knows, that his own work was well and truly done, and that, given favourable conditions, it would meet with fame, success, and reward.

The struggle within him was terrible. On the one hand was his love, the one and only possible love for him; on the other was sacrifice, greater than could be conceived by mortal man.

A fire burned brightly upon the hearth, for it was winter, and very cold.

Slowly he took up the other manuscript, the work of nights upon nights of toil for those slender little fingers. Slowly he moved over from his desk to the fireplace, and as slowly dropped into the flames "Her second love."

* * * * *

Imperial Theatre.

Dear Madam,

Upon the recommendation of my reader and, I may add, after a personal perusal of your play *Her Second Love*, I have, subject, of course, to future discussion between us as to terms, etc., decided to produce it.

I propose calling upon you, if you will be good enough to name early date, and hour.

Faithfully yours,
Athol Fearis.

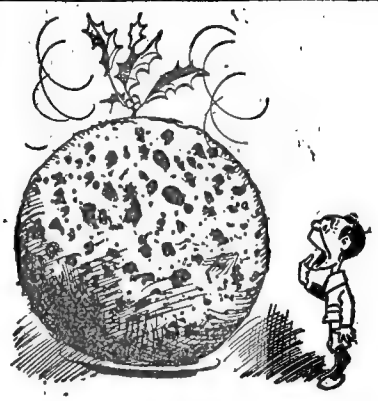
To Miss Ella Drake

* * * * *

"A great success," said the critics. "A great sucess," echoed the public, but Harold McIvor is still of the same opinion with regard to woman as a possible playwright, although the name of the one woman in the world for him is to-day upon every lip.

He had to tell her. His crime could not be concealed. And when she came to hear the truth, how that to glorify her name, and save her from the hurtings of rejection and bitter failure, he had sacrificed, by the substitution of his own work, for hers, the ambition and longings of a lifetime, it seemed to her that she had never truly known him, who had taught her to really know herself.

Ralph Enderby.



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A REVIVAL IN HOUSE PROPERTY.

THERE is a general impression that the house property business in London and its suburbs is exceedingly dull. In fact, it is said to be nearly impossible to obtain tenants for vacant houses. To own but one house which brings in no return for its cost, but upon which taxes must be paid and repairs made, is a severe strain upon any person; while the man who owns three or four houses is thereby reduced to abject beggary.

Such are the remarks which are constantly made every day concerning the real estate business, and yet it was the impression on Wednesday last among the inhabitants of Tooting that a sudden and spirited revival had taken place.

A month ago a house-agent of this rising suburb, whose name is suppressed in order to give him time to reach foreign parts, undertook to obtain a tenant for a house. To his surprise, he was one day called upon by a man who actually wanted the house, and was willing to pay as much rent as would be equal to three-fourths of the taxes on the place. The happy house-agent promptly landed his prey by making him sign the lease, and told him that the house would be ready for him on the first day of February.

Five days later another man appeared, and expressed a strong desire to take the Tooting house. Probably the house-agent had no intention at that time of indulging in illegal practices, but it was such a novelty to have persons applying for houses, that he delayed to mention that the house was already let, and permitted the applicant to think that it was still in the market.

When the new applicant asked what the rent would be, the agent named a price much larger than the owner required, and remarked that it must be paid in advance, thinking thereby to render it unnecessary for him to undeceive his customer. The new man unhesitatingly agreed to pay the sum asked, and, promising to call the next day to sign the lease, won his way.

Before he fell asleep that night the agent had decided that he would let the house for the second time, pocket the first quarter's rent, and visit Argentina. It was a wicked resolution and the agent was a wicked man; but it must be remembered that there are few house-agents whose brains would not reel at finding two successive tenants within two successive days.

When the second applicant appeared the next day at the agent's office, he found a lease waiting for him, bearing a signature which he supposed was that of the house owner. He paid his quarter's rent in advance, pocketed the lease, and promised to occupy the house on February 1st. After he had left the office the house-agent closed his blinds, locked his door, and disappeared, and by this time he is probably on his way to a refuge where no extradition treaty can reach him.

It was about noon on February 1st that two large waggons, loaded with furniture, and escorted by two local four-wheelers, each containing a separate family, drew up at the door of the Tooting house. The two families were those of the two tenants, and the two waggons contained the first instalments of their separate furniture.

Mr. Smith, the earliest tenant, was an irascible man, and lost no time in asking what Mr. Brown, the other tenant, wanted. In a short time the conversation between the two became very lively. Each shook his lease in the face of the other, and denounced him as a swindler. Meanwhile, the vanmen demanded to know what they were to do with the furniture, and the neighbours, hearing of the dispute, turned out in great force and lined the pavement.

Foreseeing that the matter would never be settled by argument, Mr. Smith finally ordered his furniture to be carried into the house. Mr. Brown instantly issued a similar order as to his furniture, and both enlisted strong contingents of on-lookers to assist in the operation.

Each tenant felt the necessity of being the first to occupy the house.

The two heavy furniture vans were unloaded with unexampled rapidity. Mr. Smith's gang stormed the front parlour with the piano, upsetting the Brown piano on the front steps. The Brown party threw a cloud of skirmishers with chairs, bedsteads, and crockery, into the bedrooms on the second floor, locking the door of each room as fast as it was filled.

Their rivals, however, reached the third story by way of the back stairs in advance of them, and also occupied the cellar with a strong force of books and rolls of carpets. The back parlour was the scene of a severe contest, but Mr. Smith hurled iron pots through the windows, and then, mounting the breach, locked the doors from the inside and garrisoned the room with boxes and mattresses.

Of course, these successes were not gained without heavy losses, and there was scarcely an article of furniture which was not wounded. When hostilities were suspended until reinforcements of furniture should arrive on the following day, the position of the rival tenants was as follows.

Mr. Smith occupied the cellar, the front and back parlours, and the third story.

Mr. Brown occupied the whole of the second storey and the remains of his piano occupied nearly all the front yard and a part of the adjacent street.

These positions are still held, and each side has enlisted half-a-dozen lawyers, who are busily applying for injunctions, writs of dispossessions, orders for arrest, and other legal delicacies.

P. E. ARSON.

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BY THE HEAD OF A MANDARIN.

In Three Parts.

BY SADI GRANT.

PART I.

FROM the window of a feudal Castle in the North of China, a young man was looking out on the tumbled grey stormy waters of the China Sea. He was tall and well made, with the yellow complexion of his race. His line of ancestors was unbroken for five hundred years and more, and from his many grandfathers of the purest blood in China he had inherited the slanting almond eyes, flat nose, and prominent cheek-bones that all well-bred Chinese admire. His name was Li Ki Foo, and he was the eldest son of a Mandarin.

This Castle of Amoy belonged to his father, who came there in the hot months of summer from Pekin. It was battlemented and fortified in a very old-fashioned way; a couple of guns and an enemy's man-o'-war half-a-mile out to sea would have completely dismantled it in two or three hours. Flowering shrubs grew here and there on the rough ground below the Castle, but there was no attempt at a real garden here that lay behind, where two acres of most flourishing land was under the care of Chin Lung, the head gardener—an imposing individual, who trampled on his six under-gardeners as thoroughly as any Scotch fellow-artiste in England could have done.

Li Ki Foo was dressed in a loose jacket and trousers of purple silk; he wore no collar—it is not the custom in China—his jacket only just reached his throat, which was left bare. His trousers fitted tightly below the knee, and finished at his ankles, showing fine socks of silk and black polished shoes. Li Ki Foo had been an *attaché* at the Embassy in London, and was well acquainted with European dress and ways; sometimes he wished that in Europe he were allowed by his religion and the unwritten laws of his country to dress like other people, and so avoid being conspicuous, though still he thought that in beauty and convenience the dress and customs of his own country were superior to anything he had seen in Europe.

He was waiting now, with what patience he could command, for the entrance of his father, the most excellent and honourable Li Lang Hi, one of Her Majesty the Queen Empress's most favoured Councillors. The midday meal was ready and the old butler only waited the entrance of his Master to bring it in. On a small low table of inlaid ivory lay the post bag, brought over by a courier on horseback from the neighbouring town, and Li Ki Foo, being but mortal, wished to see if there were any letters for him in it. How were his famous trotting ponies getting on? Had a rival Chinese dandy put him out in the race for the Tientsin Plate? It was hard to be buried here in Amoy, while the world went its fashionable way without him. Not a sign of this impatience, however, was to be seen on Li Ki Foo's impassible face as he stood looking out on the stormy sea like an image of stone.

A movement in the room behind at last made him look round. Three or four Chinamen were coming in. The first was the Mandarin himself, a dried up, parchment-like old man, dressed in a grey silk petticoat and the yellow jacket that showed his rank. Of the other men, one was his secretary, another the chief steward of the house, and another his private priest. Li Ki Foo bowed low three times, a salutation his father answered by a curt nod; then he sat down on a low, comfortably-cushioned arm chair and drew the post bag towards him.

"What news from Pekin?" he said, as he unlocked it with a little key hung at his girdle, "goes all well at the Summer Palace, my leave of absence can be prolonged. Many letters for you, my son, four, five, six, verily the youth of the present day has more time to waste on scribbling than in my young days."

Li Ki Foo advanced and took his letters.

The old man continued: "Ha! I see letters from Canton from the Mandarin Kiu Lan; that will be about the marriage feast of his daughter, O Li Ki Foo. This concerns you most, but I cannot trouble to look at any of these letters before tiffin. Send the dishes in," he said to the chief steward, with a wave of his long, thin hand.

Li Ki Foo sat down on another low chair near his father, and laughed.

"I, too, am hungry, O my father; I have ridden many miles this morning without breaking my fast."

"And wherefore?" said the old Mandarin, rather crossly. "Are these the ways learnt in the land of the Barbarians? I have heard they do naught but try feats of strength to wear out their bodies before their time, and bathe at all hours of the day to exhaust themselves still further."

"It succeeds well with them, my father," said Li Ki Foo, "where see you finer developed limbs and muscles than among these Englishmen? In China the education of the brain is only studied, not the education of the body."

The old Mandarin looked at his son's stalwart frame and chuckled.

"Yet am I not ill-pleased with thee, O Li Ki Foo; thou art no weakling, that I should fear the degeneration of our race. But see, here comes Akkim with the eggs and the tea; at least admit, oh, my son, that in this dark island of theirs, thou sawest no tea to compare with what thou hast in my house. It were impossible, for I share of the Imperial first leaf-picking, of which none is exported to foreign lands."

Li Ki Foo sipped his strong, scented Orange Pekoe with appreciation.

"Your Excellency speaks but the truth," he said, "there is no tea worthy of the name in England, save at the Embassy, where the Ambassador can take care of himself. These barbarians drink a black decoction of old and inferior leaves, that often stands with water on it for fully half-an-hour; to this they add milk or cream to disguise the flavour. Tea in its real state they do not know."

"And eggs, too," continued the old Mandarin, who was never tired of finding out from his son the curious ways of Europe. "I am told they eat eggs as the common Chinamen do—fresh, at most but two days old, thereby losing the true flavour."

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"It is so, your Excellency," said Li Ki Foo. "The black egg of two years old, with its curious, yet delicate, odour, is unknown in Europe, thereby they miss much," and Li Ki Foo commenced his third black egg.

"Two years—no less and no more—is the right age," said the Mandarin solemnly. "Each year a sufficient number of eggs for my use are preserved in trays, carefully dated. Is it not so, Akkim?"

"It is so, most honoured one," said Akkim.

"It is said," continued the old noble pensively, "that Her Majesty the Queen Empress has so fine a palate that, when her chief steward caused to be served to her an egg of but eighteen months' keeping, she detected the imposture at once."

"Ha!" said Li Ki Foo, "and what chanced to the chief steward?"

"He died the death of many criminals," said the Mandarin peacefully, "fastened in a cage wherein he could neither sit nor rest, nor even stand save on his toes, placed on the great bridge of Pekin without food or drink, save from the charity of the passer-by. I saw him oft; he lasted ten long days and nights."

"Ah," said Li Ki Foo in an uninterested manner, "and yet, perchance, Her Imperial Majesty was mistaken."

"It may be, it may be," said the old Mandarin; "the criminal asserted it to his last moments, but of what avail was that? The deep reasonings of Her Majesty could not be denied. The Celestial intellect could not admit mistake. It was after all but of slight consequence, the death of one man."

"Of slight consequence, save to himself," said Li Ki Foo.

"To himself!" said the Mandarin, "and what was he? The dust of the earth only. I fear me this sojourn of thine in England has bred foolish ideas in thee. O my son. What is the life of one man in the sight of Her Majesty? Naught."

"Naught, indeed," said Li Ki Foo bitterly, thinking of the hundreds the Queen Empress had caused to be slaughtered in her day.

The old Mandarin shook his head sadly.

"Thou wilt make no courtier, O Li Ki Foo," he said, "if thou canst speak of Her Imperial Majesty with aught but adoration."

Then his thoughts were diverted from the egg and steward question by the entry of some new and tasty dish, of which he was pleased to approve.

"I see there a packet," said Li Ki Foo, after a pause, "among the letters at thy right hand."

The Mandarin looked at it suspiciously and called his secretary.

"Take that and see whence it comes," he said, sharply; "but take it to the other end of the room, for in these days of anarchy and lawlessness it might contain an explosive."

The secretary, a thin, pale young man with spectacles, took the packet; evidently it was of no consequence if he were blown up by chance or design.

"The parcel is from Tartary, may it please your Excellency," he said, after a short examination of the outside.

"From Tartary!" repeated the Mandarin. "I know of no official who writes to me from that province. Open the packet, Ah Keu."

The secretary cut the string that bound it with a small knife, and then unrolled the thick paper of which the outside wrapper was composed. Inside there was a sheet of very grubby writing paper, and a small oblong object wrapped in a piece of blood-stained linen. This he undid carefully, and exposed to view a finger severed at the second joint—a man's little finger, with a deep scar like a burn on the left side. This and the sheet of paper, on which were some vertical lines of Chinese writing, Ah Keu placed on the inlaid table by the side of the Mandarin.

"See to this, O Li Ki Foo," said the old man crossly.

The first was the mandarin himself.

"Why is this sent to me? Am I not troubled enough by the vacillations of Court intrigue that my life should be further darkened by idle threats? For I conceive this is a threat—of some criminal, possibly—to induce me to interfere in his behalf."

Li Ki Foo quietly took the ghastly package from the table, and the letter with it.

"This is the finger of your Excellency's son, Li Ham," he said coldly, "the writer says it can be recognised by the scar on the left side."

Li Lang Hi took the finger and examined it, but without excitement. He had eighteen sons, and really could not be expected to have very vivid feelings of affection for them all.

"The finger is that of Li Ham, no doubt," he said, "the scar was caused by oil from a burning torch falling on his hand at a festival in the Great Temple. Rather than disturb the sacred rites Li Ham suffered the oil to remain on the flesh, thereby causing an indelible scar. What mischief is he engaged in now?" continued the Mandarin angrily, "and what business

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has he in Tartary? He was sent to a Mongolian monastery to study a folio of the great Confucius, and to perfect himself in knowledge of the ancient laws. But he was ever unruly and wishful for unknown dangers."

"In danger he seems now, at any rate, O Li Lang Hi," said Li Ki Foo blandly; "this paper is from a robber chief in Tartary, from the head of a wandering tribe, into whose hands Li Ham has fallen. Shall I read it to your Excellency?"

The Mandarin nodded, and Li Ki Foo read out:

"To the Mandarin Li Lang Hi—Greeting.

"Thy son, O, Mandarin, lies helpless in my hands. In token I send thee his finger, marked as thou wilt recognise, from a burn three years past. Send ten thousand taels of silver for his ransom by the fourteenth day of the next moon, or I swear by thy head, O Mandarin, I will kill him by the Heavy Death and scatter his bones to the winds of Heaven. An agent at Kin Sin, on the Great Wall of China, will receive the silver, and will make himself known on the arrival of the messenger.—Signed, Ku, Chief of the Lusan Tribe."

"Ten thousand taels of silver!" gasped the old Mandarin, "does this vermin think I am made of money? Li Ham is not worth a tenth part of such a sum."

"Yet he is thy son, O Mandarin," said Li Ki Foo; "should he die by the hands of a robber and his bones not be preserved in the family tomb, it were a disgrace to our ancient line."

Li Ki Foo was not at all excited on the subject, he had scarcely ever seen Li Ham, but still he felt the honour of the family required some sacrifice.

Li Ki Foo read out: "To the Mandarin Li Lang Hi—Greeting."

"Why should he wander on the Steppes of Tartary?" groaned the old man, "Why could he could not keep to his own business? Are my hard-earned taels to be squandered on robber tribes? Nay, O Li Ki Foo, I will not send the money. I am old, and I will not be reduced to poverty in the evening of my days."

Li Ki Foo knew there was little chance of this, whatever happened. Did not the great coal mines on the Yangtse Kiang belong to them, not to speak of hundreds of miles of fertile land and sea frontage? Still, there was no doubt ten thousand taels was a nice, compact sum to see vanish from the family coffers.

Li Ham was rather an advanced young Chinaman, brought up for the study of the law; but he showed much more inclination for hunting and racing and sport of all kinds than an earnest student should do. Even in dress he was frivolous; he did not dare to discard the coat and petticoat of his profession, but he had caused quite a scandal in Pekin by appearing on the public drive with a very rakish grey Terai hat set sideways on his head, and driving a very smart pony in an English ralli cart. A very fat old Chinese judge had nearly had a fit of apoplexy on recognising him that afternoon, and it had been delicately conveyed to the delinquent's family that a short absence from Pekin might be advisable. Hence his journey to Mongolia, and then there was no doubt further lightness of character had conducted him to shoot llamas in Tartary.

"'Tis the decadence of the age," groaned the old Mandarin, "'tis the example of these miserable barbarians, who go hundreds of miles to shoot and hunt, and whose attire is sufficient to disgust a well-bred Chinaman. Are they not hideous enough as Nature makes them, with their short hair and round eyes and beak-like noses, that they should seek to wear such garments that the very birds of the air are scared at the sight? They ruin the Celestial Empire and deprave our noble families by their pernicious example."

"Yet are there no Englishmen in Tartary at present," said Li Ki Foo, "this misadventure cannot be laid to their charge, O Mandarin."

"How knowest thou that?" said Li Lang Hi sharply; "where mischief is, there are the English. Mark my words, O Li Ki Foo, the boy went not to Tartary alone, and what sane Chinaman would risk his skin on those wild steppes for naught? Yet a barbarian will, to catch a new beetle, forsooth, or to drive hammer into rocks of granite, nay, for no reason whatsoever, save to see what they can see new and strange, these English will go anywhere, to the end of the Great Wall, to the Gates of Hell—and thy brother Li Ham is fool enough to go with them."

"'Tis possible he is with some of the Embassy," said Li Ki Foo doubtfully, "but had it been so, the Ambassador would have also communicated with you."

The Mandarin grunted disgustedly.

"This robber Ku," he said, taking up the paper again, "means what he says; he swears it by my head, the head of a Mandarin, a solemn oath. What do you counsel, O Li Ki Foo?"

"I have a plan, O my Father," said Li Ki Foo, "which I trust may meet with your approval; it is this—that I myself should take the ransom to Tartary, and that I should first try to deliver Li Ham from the robber before paying it."

The Mandarin hesitated.

"Thou art my eldest and favoured son," he said, "I like it not that thou shouldst place thyself in a position of danger."

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"I will be careful and prudent, O my father," said Li Ki Foo coldly, "the danger will be small. I see no other way to save Li Ham and, at the same time, avoid the loss of so large a sum."

"Still, I like it not," said the old Mandarin; "thy mother was dear to me in days gone by, O Li Ki Foo."

Li Ki Foo was very much astonished at this evidence of affection for him, or his mother either; he did not remember her; she had died suddenly when he was about two years old, and he had even heard a rumour that she had been helped to her death by means of a sack and a midnight boating excursion, arranged by her loving husband. However, one cannot believe everything, and he was quite willing to let bygones be bygones.

"Your affection honours me, O Mandarin," he said, "yet would I still go forth. None other can do this mission as I would have it done; if I fail, it is the will of Allah, but I think not I shall fail."

"I like it not," repeated the old man, "I like it not. Are there not many men in China who will risk their lives for a moderate sum, without that thy life be put in question?"

Li Ki Foo got up impatiently.

"Without your Excellency's leave I cannot go," he said; "yet, believe me or not as thou wilt, it is the only way to arrange the matter."

"Wherefore?" said the Mandarin, "has no man brains but thou? Thou art conceited, O my son."

"Say, then, I am a liar and a fool," said Li Ki Foo impatiently; "I cannot manage the business."

"Nay," said his father, "be not too hasty! I say not thou shalt not go, but there are many things to arrange, and I must have the counsel of wiser men."

Li Ki Foo continued his meal in rather a sulky manner. He had never been to Tartary, and the adventures promised to be rather interestingly risky. However, no doubt, by patience and obstinacy, he would gain his point.

For one thing, he felt sure his respected father would leave no stone unturned to save the ten thousand taels, if he could do so, and save his son's life at the same time.

After tiffin was over, Li Ki Foo withdrew to his own apartments in the Castle, and flung himself in his favourite arm-chair in front of a window looking on to the garden, which was blazing with peonies and sweet with arum lilies. Li Ki Foo rang a hand-bell sharply, placed on a ledge near him. The embroidered hangings in one corner were lifted, and his private servant, Ah Cheh, came in.

"My lord rang," said he.

"My cigars, Ah Cheh," said Li Ki Foo lazily, "and a glass of green chartreuse, and, stay—have I not heard that you have been in Tartary, beyond the Great Wall?"

"I have, my lord," said Ah Cheh. "Six years ago I went there as valet to Lord William Gore, of the English Embassy. He went to Tartary on a shooting expedition and stayed there two months."

"Ha!" said his master, "that is well. It is possible I may require you to go beyond the Great Wall also."

He sat and smoked silently while Ah Cheh brought the Chartreuse and placed it on a small silver tray on a corner of the writing-table.

"My cigars, Ah Cheh," said Li Ki Foo lazily.

"Stay," said Li Ki Foo, as Ah Cheh was leaving the room. "Come here, Ah Cheh, and listen to me. I want you to draw up on paper, and submit to me in an hour, the number of men and horses in Lord William Gore's expedition and the stores necessary to take for two months' travel. Report to me as fully as your memory guides you, and, above all, say naught on the subject to any servants of his Excellency my father."

Ah Cheh bowed solemnly; it was no business of his to make remarks. In his inmost soul he was not pleased at the prospect of an expedition to Tartary, for very few Chinamen have any spirit of adventure, and Ah Cheh was remarkably comfortable just then in the castle of Amoy. However, in an hour's time he had drawn up a very complete list of what composed Lord William's expedition—of the servants, horses, and stores—and brought it to his master. Li Ki Foo glanced over it hastily.

"In how many days' time could you furnish forth a similar equipment, Ah Cheh?" he said.

"My lord thinks, then, of taking this journey?" said Ah Cheh. "To do it with comfort and in good order, six weeks' time of preparation should be sufficient; the horses must be carefully chosen for hard work, ammunition and food collected, all these things cannot be got together under that time."

"Then I must set forth without them," said Li Ki Foo carelessly; "in two days, at latest, do I start for Leh on the Great Wall, and thou wilt go with me. From now till t en do thy best—I give thee a free hand in money matters."

Ah Cheh bowed low, he never thought of objecting.

"My poor best is at your lordship's service," he said slowly; "in two days I will have a troop of horse, be it but a small one, at your lordship's disposal."

(To be continued.)

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT SNAKES.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "The Duke and the Damsel," by Richard Marsh, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. W. J. Bristow, 119 Stratford Road, Plaistow, E. Attempts this week must deal with Stories about GIRAFFES, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, December 3rd. Post-cards only, please.

Harmless, After All.

NEW-COMERS from England to the Island of Borneo are, as a rule, very much afraid of being bitten by snakes.

A story is told of a young fellow who, very soon after his arrival, stepped on a snake, and felt the dreaded fang puncture his calf.

Having heard that powerful doses of alcohol, and the external application of liquid ammonia, were the only antidotes to a painful death in such cases, he applied himself to a bottle of brandy, with the recklessness of despair, and saturated his fang-punctured flesh with liquid ammonia till he roared with agony.

When he had got thus far in his fierce struggle with death, he found time to look at and examine the snake that had bitten him, and then discovered that it was one of the most harmless of its species.

Very sick, and, thanks to the ammonia, bellowing and groaning alternately, he staggered off, and tied himself up in knots in his attempts to kick himself.

W. J. B.

Where were the Other Two.

THE wife of a professor was one morning putting on her boots. A little scream attracted the professor's attention. Not having risen, he leant forward anxiously on his elbow and inquired what was the matter.

"Why, a little snake has just crawled out of my boot!" cried she.

"Only one, my dear?" interrogated the professor, calmly lying down again. "There should have been three."

He had put them there to keep them warm.

R. T.

The Duty on Snakes.

THE Custom House officer was going through his baggage.

"What's this?" he asked, pointing to a suspicious-looking box.

"You'll open that at your own risk," said the traveller.

"What does it contain?"

"Rattlesnakes."

The Custom House officer coughed dubiously.

"How many?" he asked.

"Five," said the other.

"Ah, well. That's all right. Rattlesnakes, if you have less than half-a-dozon of them, are free of duty."

And the box was never opened after all. W. T. M.

Once Bitten—Not Twice Shy.

A NEGRO on a Virginian plantation got bitten by a snake whilst wandering in the brushwood. His master gave him a good supply of whisky, and eventually he recovered.

A few weeks after his master saw him wandering about in the bush as if in search of something.

"What are you looking for, Sambo?" he asked.

"Looking for more snakes, massa!" answered the nigger.

J. S.

The Reason of His Love.

A SUNDAY-SCHOOL teacher, addressing her class the other day, wound up her remarks by impressing on her pupils that they ought to love all animals, and by asking one boy:

"Do you love animals?"

Boy: "Yes'm."

Sunday-school Teacher: "That's right. I'm glad you do. What animals do you like best?"

Boy: "Snakes."

Sunday-school Teacher: "Goodness! Why do you like snakes best?"

Boy: "'Cause it ain't wicked to kill 'em."

M. H.

"Snakes" in Guiana.

A BOA-CONSTRICTOR woke up thin and hungry after a three months' nap, and set off to look for his breakfast.

He was soon rewarded by the capture of an agouti, which he crushed and bolted whole, after the manner of his kind. His appetite being not yet appeased, he went farther afield in quest of prey, and presently coming to a fence, and essaying to pass through between the stakes, he was stopped midway by the lump in his body which was the outward and visible sign of the defunct but undigested agouti.

As he lay in this position, another agouti happened to wander incautiously near his nose, and was seized, constricted and swallowed in like manner.

Agouti number two passes down the serpent's body to join its predecessor, but was stopped on the other side of the fence; and the state of affairs now was that the boa could neither go ahead nor astern, being jammed by his fore-and-aft inside passengers; and in that situation was found, caught, killed, and made into a "snake story." Salt, please!

G. H.

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Thought They Were Eels.

At one of the London halls a short ago, a lady snake charmer was performing with her huge snakes, twining them round her body, neck, and arms.

Just as the performance was at its height, a voice from the gallery yelled out in a rich Irish brogue:

"Oi say, missus, 'ow much a pound do yer want fer them there eels?"

W. L.

The Snake Gave In.

A Lancashire farmer who kept a large stock of fowls was one day prevailed upon by a travelling showman to purchase a fine snake, which he was assured was so cleverly trained that it would not only perform a number of tricks, but would keep watch as well as any dog.

As the farmer had lately missed some of his chickens, he placed the snake on guard near the fowl-house. Finding, however, that he was losing his birds more rapidly than before, he one day, in a fit of passion, struck the reptile a heavy blow on the head with his stick, at the same time exclaiming:

"A pretty guardian you are, indeed! Who's been stealing my fowls, eh?"

What was his astonishment when the dying snake, with its last effort, twisted itself into a capital "I!"

E. L.

Toughish—but True.

Near Fort Snelling, in America, an officer who was standing on the edge of a ravine saw a curious-looking snake running rapidly through the grass. He drew his sabre and cut it in two. The forward part kept right on. He cut another piece and then another, but that did not stop the front part of the snake making good time along through the grass.

At first sight this snake story seems a very tough one. But it is really not at all hard to believe if a person resolutely sets his mind at it? especially with the aid of the officer's explanation.

When that gentleman followed the snake to the edge of the ravine, he found that it was a thin rope attached to one of the horses which was walking along out of sight in the ravine.

He had been cutting the horse's lariat in pieces!

W. I.

Most Un-feline.

One night I was seated alone in the "haunted room" of my house reading one of Poe's blood-curdling tales. The room overlooked a dark and secluded back yard, and I sat with my back to the window.

The midnight hour had just struck, when, oh, horrors! I heard a tap against the glass behind me, followed by a crash which froze the very marrow in my bones.

Dashing down my book and hastily turning out the gas, I fled to my bedroom, expecting every moment to feel a ghostly hand gripping me in its chilly embrace.

Nothing further took place, however, but it was a long time before I got to sleep that night.

Next morning the secret was revealed and I thirsted for the gore of a certain midnight prowler.

In the back yard lay a broken flower-pot which some wretched cat, alighting from an adjacent low roof, had knocked off the window ledge, causing me groundless terror.

W. C.

Instead of a Bell.

At a Turkish bath in Paris a visitor patiently submitted to the various operations of rubbing, kneading, and pommelling comprised in the treatment.

When the shampoo was over the attendant dried him with a towel, after which he dealt the patient three heavy sounding blows with the flat of his hand.

"Good gracious!" the victim ejaculated, "what did you strike me for?"

"Ah, monsieur, don't let that trouble you," was the reply; "it was only to let the other man know I had finished with you and that he is to send me the next customer. You see, we haven't a bell in this room."

W. T. E.

THE GREAT

TWENTY TEAZER MYSTERY.

IT TURNS OUT TO BE A PROVOKING LITTLE DEMON OF THE

PIGS in CLOVER & 15 PUZZLE TYPE

WAS DISCOVERED IN "PEARSON'S WEEKLY" OFFICE,

Was Adopted by the Editor,

AND WILL NOW BE TURNED LOOSE ON A

LONG-SUFFERING BRITISH PUBLIC,

TO SEND SOME CRAZY,

TO AMUSE OTHERS,

And GENERALLY MAKE A NUISANCE OF ITSELF.

During the past twelve months the British public have been kept in an uneasy state of mind. First there was the war in South Africa, then the China Peril, then the General Election. Business has been in a state of stagnation, and men have grown old very quickly. Now a new trouble has arisen. The proprietors of *Pearson's Weekly* have discovered a puzzle more demoniacal, more perplexing, more fascinating, more calculated to waste valuable time and send people distracted than either Pigs in Clover or the Fifteen Puzzle.

It's a simple, inoffensive little thing, too—to look at. The sort of thing you approach with calm confidence one day and give up six months later because your friends have put you under restraint.

It consists of four square blocks of wood in a box. On the six sides of each square there is a number. You have to make four of these sides total up to twenty each all at once. Strong men have given the thing up in despair, and weak men have wept bitter tears of humiliation over wasted efforts to get it right. This little box of concentrated fiendishness only costs SIXPENCE, and will be on sale at Messrs. Smith's bookstalls, all newsagents, and fancy shops next Thursday.

TRY IT.

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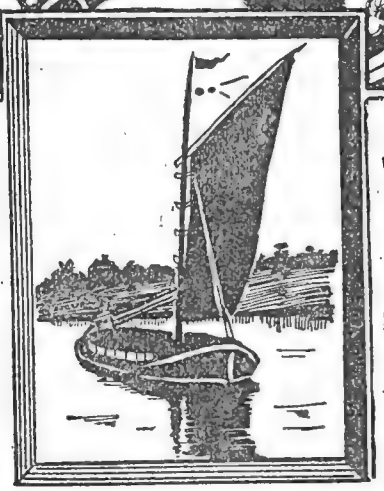

THE CAPTAIN'S WIFE.

A Tale of the American Civil War.

"I AIN'T minding other folks' business, nor never was," said the third-sergeant as he placed a rasher of bacon on the winter-hut fireplace, "but I'll go as far as to say that it don't look right."

"Of course it don't," said the second-sergeant as he put his coffee to boil, "and I guess there'll be a row about it before long. It don't look right, and it ain't military discipline."

"What are you fellows gassing about?" asked the orderly-sergeant as he came in for fire to light his pipe.

"You couldn't guess in four years' time, and I won't keep you tremblin' and shiverin'. The Captain's wife has come."

"You don't say so."

"Yes, she has. Come down to stay the winter in quarters with him, and Company D is just talking itself hoarse about it. Did you ever hear of such a thing?"

"I'll be hanged if I did. A funny thing he never said anything to me about it. Well, well."

"And we was saying," said the second-sergeant as he lifted his eyes from the coffee-cup—"we was saying that it wasn't discipline and didn't look right. Just think of a woman down here! And I'll tell you what's going to happen. She's going to poke about and talk and interfere and break up this Company. They say she used to twist her husband round her thumb when she was at home, and why wouldn't she do it here? If she happens to get down on you or me or Jim what's goin' to save us from bein' broken up?"

"Great snakes!" whispered the orderly as he sat down to his smoke.

"Well, what are you goin' to do about it?" asked the third-sergeant after a pause.

"Dunno."

"Better find out pretty quick, I guess, if you don't want to see trouble. Can't no woman be down here without wanting to run the show and Captain Shattuck? You might go and tell him how we all feel about it."

"Yes, perhaps I ought to speak to the Captain," mused the orderly, "but I'll wait and think it over. I ain't for havin' women down here, but I'm in no hurry to lose my stripes and go back into the ranks. I guess we'd better keep quiet, and wait and see what happens."

That closed the talk in the sergeants' quarters, but there was talk among the corporals and among the privates. There was the army in winter quarters, sure of a rest for three or four months, and there was the Captain of Company D with a fine large hut to himself. His colonel and his brigadier had given him permission to send for his wife, but from orderly-sergeant to the last private the men were down on the scheme. As for the lieutenants, one was away on furlough and the other on detail.

There was soon a great change in the men of Company D, but the Captain did not notice it. It was the orderly-sergeant, who was virtually in command, who noticed the glum looks and heard the mutterings. He had made up his mind to stand neutral, and neither encourage nor discourage. Once in a while, when the talk became too strong, he felt it his duty to his superior officer to say:

"Now, then, shut up! P'raps the Captain's wife is goin' to upset the apple-cart, and p'raps she ain't. It's our business to wait and see. She ain't tried to run things so far."

A month had passed and no calamities had occurred. Some of the men began to breathe easier, and to wonder if they hadn't misjudged the kind-faced and smiling little woman who was sacrificing a good deal to be with her husband a few weeks, but others were firm in their first ideas, and soberly shook their heads and replied:

"You just wait. Women ain't fools to show their hands all at once. She's lyin' low, and when she's ready there'll be a sudden and awful bust up."

It was a cavalry command, and every pleasant winter's day the Captain and his wife had a gallop over the highroads. One day an engineer was dispatched to see about repairs to a bridge spanning a creek flowing through the neutral ground between the two armies, and the orderly-sergeant of Company D was detailed with ten men as an escort. The bridge was reached and inspected, and the engineer and his escort were ready for their ride back when there came a sudden alarm.

Half-a-mile down the road, where Captain Shattuck and his wife had debouched from a cross-road while taking an afternoon gallop, they had run full tilt against a Confederate cavalry scout. The enemy had shouted to the Captain to surrender, and as he wheeled his horse to get away a bullet brought him out of the saddle. His wife would have pulled up her steed, but he took the bit in his mouth and was beyond control. As she went flying up the road the scouting party followed. They knew of the small detachment of Federals at the bridge, and were hoping to make a surprise.

"It's the Captain's wife, and the Johnnies are close

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behind her!" shouted the sergeant as the woman came into view with a great clatter. "Open ranks and let her through, and then close up and give 'em hail Columbia."

With a rush and a clatter the horse of the fugitive passed the blue-clad troopers, but came to a dead halt a few rods beyond and turned about. A volley from the carbines checked the pursuers for the moment, but it was seen that they were strong enough to break through, and the sergeant gave the order to fall back to an abandoned log-house a quarter of a mile in the rear.

"Men," exclaimed the woman as she looked from man to man, "do you know that your Captain is back there, wounded and a prisoner? Are you going to leave him there?"

"It's too bad, ma'am, but they are three to one," replied the sergeant. "We'll be lucky if we ain't killed or gobbled up before help comes."

"But I'm going to ride back!" she cried, as her pale face flashed and her voice had a thrill to it. "If you won't go with me to rescue your Captain I'll let them take me prisoner and go to Richmond with him."

"My goodness, but she's a brave one!" whispered man to man.

"Heavens, ma'am," hoarsely whispered the sergeant with admiration in his eyes, "but we'll have the Captain or die! How far down the road was it?"

"Not over half-a-mile."

"And how many rebels in the party?"

"Not over fifty."

"Fifty rebels and ten of us! We'll never do it, but we'll die for the Captain. Into the saddles, boys. Ye'll ride on towards camp with the engineer, ma'am?"

"Not a foot. I'm going with you. Someone give me a revolver."

"By twos—right wheel!" shouted the sergeant as he handed her his revolver and drew his sabre. "Now, then, ride through or over them and don't stop this side of the Captain or destruction."

It was a curious spectacle the grey-clad soldiers witnessed—a woman riding at the head of the charging squadron—a woman with white face and glittering eyes, who held her reins in one hand and used the pistol with deadly effect with the other. Through the thick of them she went, and through the thick of them followed the ten, and fearing that the alarm might have already reached the Federal camps the Confederates disappeared into the woods instead of pursuing.

Down there beyond the bridge the Captain was lying on the ground with a bullet in his shoulder and three men guarding him. The cavalcade swept up to them and surrounded them, and there were three prisoners instead of three guards.

"Excuse me, sir, but it was the Captain's wife who did it all," said the sergeant as he reported to the Colonel. "She not only saved her husband from Libby Prison, but we might all have been wiped out if we'd made a fight for it at the old house."

That evening, as the second and third sergeants ate their evening meals, the third-sergeant looked up and said:

"Well, I ain't mindin' other folk's bizness, nor never was, but I'll go as far as to say——"

"Say, now," interrupted the second-sergeant, "if it hadn't been for your gab the boys wouldn't have made fools of themselves about the Captain's wife comin' down."

"You said as much as I did."

"You're a liar!"

"What're ye mad about? Didn't we all say——"

"Didn't we all say what?" asked the orderly-sergeant as he came into the hut.

"Didn't we all say that a woman had no bizness down here, and that the Captain's wife would bust the Company all to smash?"

"Look here, you fellers," replied the sergeant in menacing tones, "you want to stop your gabbin' and see that all others do the same. This mornin' there was ninety-one fools in Company D. This evenin' there ain't more than one, and I'm looking round to get my paws on him and break his neck."

"Goodness, but I allus knowed the Captain's wife was a daisy," gasped the third-sergeant.

"You bet your bottom dollar," added the second-sergeant.

"Then you finish your grub and rout out the boys, for we're going up to swing our hats and give three cheers for her."

C. B. Lewis.

37 TEN-POUND MEN AND 1 TEN-POUND LADY CAPTURED.

Since last week three more Sealed Envelopes have been claimed, the lucky captors being:

Mr. Thos. Tyzack, 16 Belmont View, Belmont Road, Liverpool,
who captured No. 65 at a Football Match.

Mr. J. Mamelok, 33 and 37 Oxford Street, Manchester,
who captured No. 60 in his shop.

Mr. W. Kirk, 129 Hill Street, Sheffield,
who captured No. 64 at a Football Match.

£380 HAS NOW BEEN PAID AWAY,

and there are still a number of Sealed Envelopes awaiting claimants.

There are also ten Ten-Pound Ladies travelling about the country who are only allowed to deliver their Envelopes to ladies.

The celebrated song

"HAVE YOU GOT THAT £10 NOTE?"

is now on sale, and can be obtained from all newsagents for 1s. 4d., or direct from the Song Department, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., for 1s. 6d. Postal Order (not stamps) post free.

PLAYED ON THE STAGE.

Two sketches have been written on the subject of the Ten-Pound Note Scheme, one lasting about half-an-hour and one fifteen minutes.

In No. 1 Sketch the cast consists of four actors and two actresses. In No. 2 Sketch the cast consists of two actors and one actress.

Any organisers of entertainments for Christmas, such as church bazaars or Christmas parties, or private theatricals, who wish to include either of these sketches in their attractions, should write to the Ten-Pound Sketch Department, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Full particulars of the Scheme will be sent on application to Room 36, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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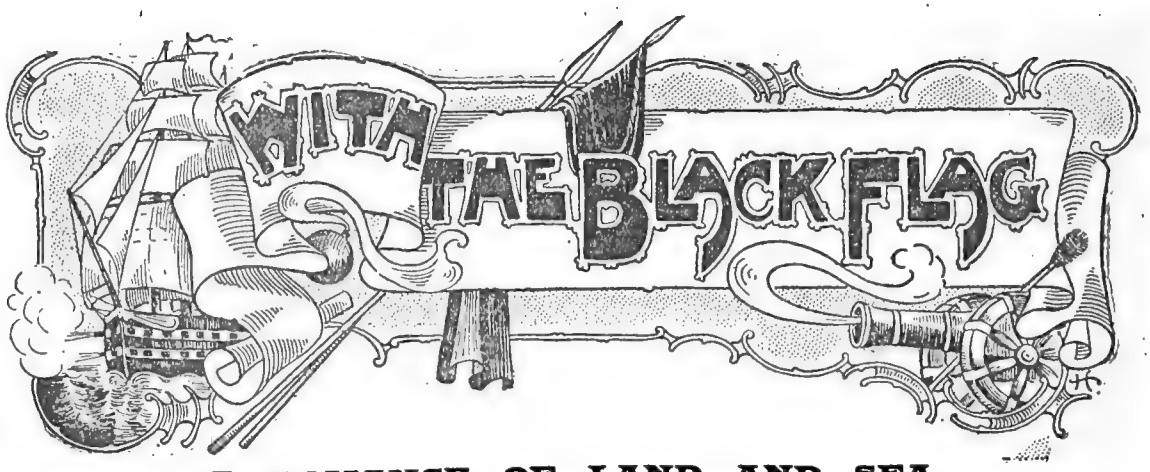

A ROMANCE OF LAND AND SEA.

By WILLIAM WESTALL.

Author of "With the Red Eagle," "The Phantom City," "Nigel Fortescue," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXII. (*concluded*).

So we resumed our journey, not very cheerfully perhaps, yet with easy minds.

The country was open, our course north, and the trend of the ground upward, so that we were soon above the lower part of the plain and the level of the river, which was unusually high.

Rosalind and I rode together. We said little, for our hearts were full. She was leaving her home and her kindred, I a place endeared to me by the pleasant memories of several happy months, and the chances were a hundred to one that we should never see it again.

Every now and then we paused and looked backward. I had never seen Manoa more beautiful or Mount Lofty more majestic. It was a lovely morning, too, with a cloudless sky and a brisk air, the sun not being yet so high as to make it unpleasantly warm.

"It is very hard for you, dear," I said taking Rosalind's hand.

"Yes, and my heart is heavy, yet am I glad withal. It had been still harder to see you lying dead as I saw my dear father; and had we tarried that would have been. We are leaving Manoa, but we are going home, for your home will be my home. I have no other now and want no other."

"And it shall be a happy home, darling. I will try to make up to you—hallo, what has happened?"

As though moved by a common impulse all the mules had come to a dead stop, stiffening and stretching out their legs, as sailors do on a rolling ship.

"Heaven help us! An earthquake!" I exclaimed, and slipping out of my saddle I helped Rosalind from hers.

The ground was oscillating so violently that we could scarce keep our feet, the mountains rocked, and there came, as from the bowels of the earth, a moan of muffled thunder, the most appalling sound I had ever heard. Then, with a roar that shook the air, Mount Lofty sent forth a shower of ashes that darkened the sun, followed, in a few seconds, by a dense cloud of steam and smoke above which flamed a great pillar of fire, half as high as itself.

Manoa crumpled up like a piece of paper. The supporting pillars had given way, the mountain fell with a mighty crash, and from its ruins rose a vast cloud of dust.

We were too stupefied either to speak or move, almost to breathe. Rosalind clung to me shuddering, the animals bent their heads and groaned in terror.

When the dust subsided a huge volume of water could be seen pouring down from the foot of Mount Lofty. The lake had burst its banks and the course of the river being blocked, the flood came on apace, dashing the heap of *débris*, which was once Manoa, in great waves and rolling wildly over the plain.

The shocks still continued, though at longer intervals and less violently.

"Mount, we must hurry on," cried Santley. "If the quebrada should be blocked we are lost. There is no other way out."

The quebrada was the defile where the Manoeros had destroyed the Spanish invaders. So we pushed on, and none too soon, for the flood, fed by the fast melting snow and loosened springs, was following us as with the velocity of a tidal wave.

In three hours we reached the quebrada. It was still open, yet before we got through the shocks recommenced and we were in great danger from falling stones, but as to halt might have been fatal we went on as swiftly as our mules could be made to go, and presently gained open ground when, the shocks having ceased, we were able to take a rest.

But for one of our party it came too late. As we lifted Mistress Wyvenhoe from her mule she swooned away, and within an hour died of exhaustion and grief.

This, albeit a great misfortune, was less felt, even by her daughters, than in other circumstances it would have been. We had undergone so many emotions and supped so full of horrors as to be almost past feeling either sorrow or surprise, and all knew that it had been hardly possible for the poor lady to survive the hardships and dangers that still lay before us. Moreover, we dared not linger. We were on a wind swept height, many thousand feet above the sea level. After sunset the cold would be piercing, and unless before dark we reached some place where shelter might be obtained, neither Rosalind nor Diana, perhaps none of us, could outlive the night.

The poor lady's body was laid in a shallow grave, dug with difficulty, over which we placed a heavy stone. Then, silent and depressed, we continued our flight, and after two short halts for refreshment and rest came to an Indian hamlet, where we found lodgings, as Tamanac had said we should.

We set out early the next morning for the Paramos, following a track that wound among wild mountains, covered with forests that overhung the road and almost excluded the light of day. The trees were the largest I had yet seen, being continually watered by the clouds they attract, from

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which falls an incessant rain. Late in the day we arrived, thoroughly drenched, at another hamlet known to the Cazique, where we dried our clothes and passed the night. Left to ourselves, or with a less efficient guide, we should of a surety have perished in those terrible wilds.

The next day was the most trying of all. We had to cross a "paramo," which signifies a strait pass, sunless at high noon, and often swept by icy blasts so violent as to prove fatal, both to man and beast. The way was strewn with the bones of unfortunates who had attempted the passage in bad weather; and its terrors were further enhanced by its loneliness and gloom.

Not a living creature did we meet; the silence was broken only by the screams of unseen condors and the murmurs of the distant waterfalls. Twice we had to dismount and lie down to avoid the force of the blast, which at times was fierce enough to stop a strong man. One of the mules died.

Fortunately for us the paramo chosen by Tamanac was not long and the weather was not bad, and in the end we won through without disaster, though Rosalind and her sisters were only just alive. But the sunshine into which we presently emerged and a rest before a fire in an Indian's hut restored their strength, and the thought that we had overcome our chief difficulties, and that there was a fair prospect of our gaining the coast gave them courage and hope.

From this point our journey, though tedious and slow, was neither eventful nor hard. We descended into more genial climes, and ere long were marching through verdant valleys, under a burning sun.

But though the elements were propitious the whole of Spanish South America was in revolt against Spain, and for the sake of our fair companions we had to travel with great circumspection, often making long halts, while Tamanac went ahead to scout and gather information.

Every route to the sea was more or less dangerous, but that to Guayaquil being, as we heard, less so than any other, we shaped our course in that direction and arrived thither five weeks after leaving Manoa.

A little while previously the place had been taken by the patriots, from whom—Bolivar and Urdenetta being out of the way—we had nothing to fear.

Guayaquil is situated on a plain, watered by a noble river and begirt with plantations and orange groves, but the dirtiest town I ever saw. Its only scavengers are vultures and masterless dogs, and the posada, where we put up, was if possible, less cleanly than an Indian pulperia.

However, there were shops at which we could replenish our kits and obtain the garments of civilisation, and so soon as I had made myself presentable I sought information as to whether it was possible to obtain passages to England, either at Guayaquil or any other place on the coast.

Hearing, in the course of my inquiries, that a Chilian cruiser, commanded by an Englishman, had just come into port, I thought I could not do better than see him, and so took a boat and went on board.

To my unspeakable surprise the first man I saw as I stepped on deck was Cautley.

"Wyvenhoe! Good gracious! Where do you come from?" he exclaimed, taking both my hands.

"From the other side of the Andes; and you, old friend?" I answered and asked.

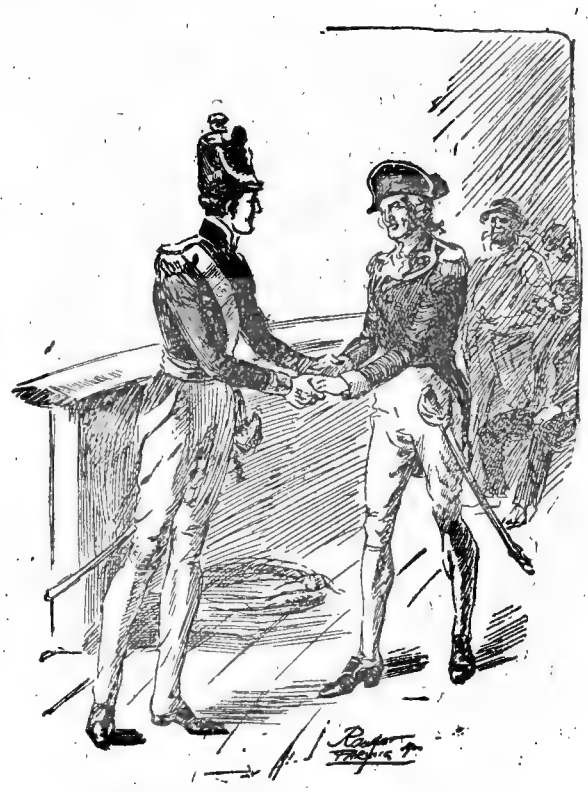
"From the other side of the continent; but come into my cabin and I will tell you all about it. By jove! The idea of our meeting here! I feared you were dead."

"Not yet, thank goodness. How is Mrs. Barnish?"

"There is no Mrs. Barnish. She is my wife and I left her at Valparaiso. You are as single as ever, I suppose?"

"No, sir, I am as much married as a Christian gentleman can be, and I left my wife at the posada."

"Hurrah! We are both in the same boat then, and not for the first time, either. Yet you always pretended to be dead set against matrimony. How did it happen?"



The first man I saw on deck was Cautley.

On this, I related briefly what had befallen me since we parted, reserving a fuller account for a more convenient opportunity, and inquired how Cautley had fared.

"On the whole not badly," he answered. "I did good work with those flecheras, took a lot of prizes, but do what I might, my Zambos would cut their prisoners' throats, and as I could not get a penny either of prize money or pay, and had to serve under an admiral who was both a lubber and a coward, I chucked it up and got a ship in the Chilian navy, which, as you may have heard, is now commanded by Admiral Lord Cochrane. You will be pleased to hear that before I left the Venezuelan service I had the satisfaction of hanging that scoundrel, Conroy. I have heard nothing more of Molyneux, but I think he must have got his quietus. Mrs. Barnish and I were married at Port-of-Spain. We spent our honeymoon on the sea, on the passage to Valparaiso, where we have a house. That, shortly told, is my tale."

I need hardly say that Cautley was presently introduced to my wife and her relatives, or that an offer which he made to convey us all to Valparaiso, was gladly accepted. Thither, after a painful parting with Tamanac, we sailed and arrived in due course.

A while afterwards there were other partings—with the Cautleys as well as with Santley and Diana, for Don Iago having obtained an appointment under the Chilian government decided to settle in Chili.

Rosalind, with my full consent, divided between her sisters the golden dower which she had received from her father.

Beatrice accompanied us to England, and stayed as our guest at Wyvenhoe Court until Providence and a gentleman provided her with a home of her own.

THE END.

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THE MEANS AND THE END.

THE old problem about doing wrong that good may come of it has been the subject of many discussions, so it is not surprising that my wife and I should have had some difference of opinion on that very point. She is a good woman, upright in all her dealings, but she stands firm to the opinion that it may, in certain exceptional cases, be justifiable to do a thing that is wrong in order that good may result from it.

Mind you, she does not say that it is justifiable anyhow, but only in exceptional cases, when you are convinced that your wrong doing will be the means of having justice done to somebody. She is strong on this point, because of an incident with which she was connected in a slight degree, and she always brings forward that experience in support of her argument whenever this subject is talked about. You will understand me better if you imagine that you are sitting with us in our cosy parlour, and listening to my wife as she tells the story:

"It was while I was in the service of Sir William Ashburton at the Lindens, acting as companion to Miss Eva, his daughter.

"Sir William was rather a peppery old gentleman—we called him 'old,' but he was only a little over fifty—and he was accustomed to have his own way. Everybody yielded to his wishes, and when he set his mind upon a thing, that thing had to be done or there was trouble. Lady Ashburton had died while the two children were young, and they had been brought up in the belief that whatever their father said was to be done, must be done.

"Things went on all right until Mr. Frederick was twenty-five, and then Sir William took it into his head that his son ought to marry."

"That was sensible enough!" I broke in.

"Don't you interrupt!" said my wife severely.

So, like an obedient husband, I kept silent until she finished the story.

"Frederick Ashburton had no objection to marrying when he met a woman who, in his opinion, would make him a good wife and whom he could love as a husband should love the partner of his joys and sorrows. But that was just the point where the father and son were at variance.

"Sir William was connected with a Mr. Hoare, a gentleman who owned property about five miles from the Lindens. The baronet and Mr. Hoare had had some business or some financial transactions together. I don't know quite what it was, but they were pretty friendly. Mr. Hoare had an only child, a daughter named Mabel, who was about two years younger than Frederick, and Sir William conceived the idea that his son should marry Mr. Hoare's daughter.

"The baronet called his son into the library one morning quite unexpectedly, and told him that he wished him to marry Mabel Hoare. Frederick protested; he said that he had not an atom of love for that young lady, that she was not the kind of girl to whom he could ally himself for life, and that he must refuse to obey his father's injunction that he would go that morning and arrange the engagement.

"'Nonsense!' raved Sir William, getting into a fury at the idea of having his wish thwarted. 'The girl's as good as any other, and she is quite willing.'

"'I have nothing to say against Miss Hoare,' replied Frederick quite calmly. 'I am not a piece of merchandise to be disposed of no matter what my feelings may be, and I cannot marry her.'

"'But you must!' cried the baronet. 'I have set my heart upon it.'

"'I am sorry to disappoint you, sir, but if Miss Hoare is willing to be disposed of like a piece of merchandise, I have not the slightest intention of marrying her!'

"'I suppose you have got yourself entangled with some low-born actress or adventuress who is anxious to become Lady Ashburton,' sneered the baronet.

"'I have done nothing of the kind, sir.'

"'Very well, then you will either marry Mabel or go your own way. To-morrow you will either be engaged to her or I shall send for my lawyer to draw up a fresh will, leaving everything to your cousin Percy. You will remember the property is not entailed.'

"The upshot of the whole business was that Frederick left home the following morning and before the week was out a new will was made. He was too much his father's son to be coerced into marriage, and as he had an income from his mother, which was sufficient for his requirements, there was no danger of him starving. With reference to the other party to the contract, Mabel Hoare had been so used to being ruled by her father, that she would have acquiesced in his arrangements without any demur.

"The only one to display any grief at the turn things had taken was Miss Eva, who deeply loved her brother, and who strongly resented the idea of her cousin reigning in the place which should have been his. Once, and once only, she tried to soften the old baronet's heart with her intreaties, but she only

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raised a storm and was forbidden to mention the subject again.

"Thus matters stood until a paralytic seizure carried off the old baronet. The night before this took place he had mentioned his son's name for the first time since his veto on the subject, and producing the will, had told Miss Eva its contents. Next morning his valet had knocked at the baronet's door several times without receiving any reply and eventually, becoming alarmed, he entered the room, to find his master unconscious. A physician was hastily summoned, but on his arrival the only hope he could give was that Sir William might possibly regain consciousness but recovery was out of the question.

"Miss Eva telegraphed to her brother, with whom she had kept in communication, but before he arrived the old baronet was dead.

"'It was after his death that we made a discovery that astounded us,' said Sir Frederick. 'No will could be found. His lawyer and I searched his papers for the document which had been drawn up and witnessed six weeks before, but it could not be found. My sister was asked to assist us in the search, but instead of doing so she looked at me with a curious smile and quietly informed us that she knew there was no will.'

"'But I drew one up only a few weeks ago,' said the solicitor, 'though I can assure you it was with extreme regret, but I could only do as instructed.'

"'I know all about that will,' replied my sister. 'The night previous to my father's seizure he called me into the library, and there in his presence, and at his request, I destroyed the will which left everything to Percy. My father expressed his intention of sending for his lawyer next day, but as you know, next morning he was powerless and he died without ever regaining his speech, though he recovered consciousness just at the last.'

"'That being the case,' said the solicitor, 'I shall have the pleasure of congratulating you, Sir Frederick, and I am heartily glad to do so.'

"This then was the explanation of my mistress's ramblings. The question now was whether the will had been destroyed or had Miss Eva hidden it. On one point Sir Frederick was firm. Upon no consideration would he retain possession of what was legally, if not justly, the property of his cousin.

"After a long discussion we decided upon the course to take.

"As long as Miss Eva bore the burden of her sin—though I am not sure that is the right word for it—so long would our efforts be in vain.

"The disclosure would no doubt be painful to her, argued the doctor, but after the first shock there would be a relaxing of the tension which would bring relief to the troubled mind.

"Immediately we had come to a decision Dr. Sumners and I went up to Miss Eva's room, where she was lying in bed in a thoroughly exhausted condition. She was awake and accordingly I slipped out again to fetch Sir Frederick, while the doctor endeavoured to prepare her for the interview with her brother.

"When we returned she was quietly weeping on her pillow.

"Sir Frederick went straight to her bedside and quietly kissed her.

"'Now, darling,' he said, 'we have not come to scold you, so dry those tears.'

"Turning to Dr. Sumners he quietly asked if he had told her of the disclosures of the night, and upon

THE

"WHITE MAN'S BURDEN."

Facts About Corpulence.

The burden of adipose tissue under which so many men and women suffer, with more or less patience and resignation, is one which none need bear who will listen to the teachings of science as set forth in a little book entitled "Corpulency and its Cure," by Mr. F. Cecil Russell, a well-known specialist, who has devoted many years of study to the subject—for however alarming it may sound to those who have a tendency to fatness, obesity *is* an undesirable encumbrance, and must be treated accordingly. It is singular indeed, that the medical profession should have given so little attention to the causes and the cure of this distressing malady, especially when it is known that an abnormal weight of fat accumulating around the internal organs leads not unfrequently to what is called fatty degeneration of the heart and liver. In Mr. Russell's treatise, which has recently reached its eighteenth edition (a significant proof of its popularity), the subject is treated with great thoroughness and lucidity. Eschewing the usual obscurities of scientific terminology, the author explains in good homespun English the origin of fat, the causes and the dangers of its undue accumulation, and the symptoms of the various ailments engendered thereby. Furthermore, Mr. Russell goes exhaustively into his unique method of treatment, and gives the ingredients (which are purely vegetable and absolutely harmless) of the preparation with which his name is associated. "Doing Russell" is a not uncommon phrase, and certainly one which has no terrors for those who have gone through this really agreeable treatment. The system is, in fact, as admirably simple as it is marvellously efficacious. It entails but slight interference with one's ordinary dietary, there are no arbitrary restrictions of any sort, and the preparation Mr. Russell prescribes is of so pleasant a kind that many persons take it, diluted with water, as a table beverage. This is no starvation *régime*; on the contrary, whilst the reduction of adipose matter is being effected, safely and surely, at the rate of no less than from 3lb. to 4lb. per week (sometimes considerably more), the appetite is improved, the system is gradually toned up, and strength, energy, and vitality are increased. The dainty little book under notice can be obtained by any of our readers who will send two penny stamps to Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London. Hundreds of grateful and enthusiastic letters from "ex-corpulents" are printed in this interesting work.

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receiving an affirmative nod he again turned to his sister, who was trembling like a leaf.

"'Now, little girl,' he said, 'I know it was your love for me that prompted your action, but you know, Eva, I cannot retain what is not legally mine. My mother's legacy is sufficient for my needs, so I shall not be reduced to begging my bread, or even seeking a situation as a clerk in a merchant's office. I don't want you to excite yourself and do harm, but just tell me quietly what became of the will which my father made.'

"'Shall I be prosecuted for fraud,' she asked pitifully.

"'No, little goose,' replied Sir Frederick. 'Trust me to arrange everything. The outside world will never know anything about it.'

"Then we got the story, slowly and painfully told.

"When the doctor's pronouncement had been made and she knew that there was no hope of her father's recovery, her heart rose in rebellion at the thought of her cousin reigning in her brother's stead, and when her father eventually died without regaining the power of speech, she decided upon the act which was to insure Sir Frederick getting what she considered to be rightfully his.

"When she left the death-chamber to go to her room she had obtained possession of her father's keys, and hastily rushing to the library, she secured the will which she had seen him place in his desk the previous night, and in the security of her own room, she tore it into fragments and then reduced it to ashes. From that moment she knew no peace, but in her conscious moments she would have died rather than have divulged the secret of the missing will.

"When the story was told Sir Frederick spoke to her with added tenderness. He was deeply moved by this evidence of his sister's devotion, but he was too honourable to wish to avail himself of it. Miss Eva was quite exhausted when she had finished, and administering an opiate we left her.

"Sir Frederick's first act was to dispatch an urgent wire, reply paid, to his cousin, who was in London, summoning him to the Grange, and in a short time the reply came, informing us that he was starting at once. During the period of waiting Sir Frederick busied himself in the library, Dr. Sumners went off to visit his other patients, having first promised to return in the evening, and I retired to obtain some rest, but so great was my interest that sleep was out of the question.

"Percy Ashburton arrived about eight that evening. He was a fine fellow, with an athletic form and frank open countenance, and when I was introduced to him I thought there was not much fear of him causing any unpleasantness, and the subsequent proceedings showed that I had judged him correctly.

"When Dr. Sumners arrived we adjourned to the library and there Percy Ashburton was enlightened as to the nature of the business upon which he had been called to the Grange. I felt quite sorry for Sir Frederick, for it was very evident that the story of his sister's sin—I can't reconcile myself to that word, by the way—was an extremely painful one for him to tell.

"The man whom she would have deprived of his legacy listened in silence until Sir Frederick had finished, and then he burst out:

"'What a brick your sister must be, old fellow.'

"'I'm afraid that is hardly the question,' replied Sir Frederick.

"'Well, let us get the business settled at once,' went on his cousin. 'You don't imagine I am going to turn you out, do you? If your father was unjust I am not going to take advantage of his injustice, so that's settled without the assistance of any lawyers. But I wish I had a sister like yours.'

"To say that Sir Frederick was astonished quite fails to express the situation.

"Then commenced an argument. Both insisted on the other taking possession, but Percy absolutely refused to have anything to do with the estate.

"'You may argue till doomsday, old fellow, but you won't shake my resolution. I'm as obstinate as any mule that ever kicked,' he said, 'and so there's an end of the matter.'

"And so it was. Sir Frederick had to give way in the end, for you know you can't force a man into taking possession.

"He stayed on for a few days at the Grange, but he absolutely refused to discuss the subject again.

"'Look here, old man,' he said one day when Sir Frederick wanted to introduce the subject, 'it appears to me I have more respect for your sister than you have. If I bundled you out, there would have to be some explanation. As it is, nobody beyond those who already know—and I am sure they will treat the subject confidentially—need know anything about it, and so will you oblige me by shutting up.'

"So Percy Ashburton returned to his briefs and Sir Frederick retained possession.

"Percy had refused to see Miss Eva, as he was afraid it would be painful to her to meet him, but when she had regained her strength, which she began to do soon after getting rid of her burden, she insisted upon him being invited to the Grange, so that she might express her regret and her gratitude at the same time.

"His admiration of the 'brick of a sister' had by no means diminished in the interval, for about six months after I left the Grange I received an invitation to a wedding there, the contracting parties being, to put it in the language of newspaper men, Percy Ashburton, Esq., barrister, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, and Miss Eva Ashburton, only daughter of the late Sir William Ashburton, of the Grange, Templestowe.

"The happy man took the opportunity of privately informing me that he thought he had done better than he would have done by taking the Grange, and the Lindens got a tenant after all, as Sir Frederick handed the place over as a wedding present.

"Now, John, was Miss Eva justified in her act?" asked my wife in conclusion.

"Well," replied I, "as events turned out so happily it hardly seems worth while discussing it now, but I am afraid if Percy Ashburton had been a different sort of chap, there might have been a very disagreeable sequel to the business."

"Oh! don't be so matter-of-fact, John, in your remarks. Eva Ashburton was and is one of the dearest girls that ever breathed," replied my wife, and to avoid further discussion I assented, briefly remarking that I had the honour of very close acquaintance with another equally dear girl, to which the only reply I got was "You silly old flatterer," and the discussion was allowed to drop, as the reporters say.

But what is your opinion, my worthy readers? Was it a justifiable sin?

Percy Ashburton, who is a barrister, says it was, and being a barrister, his opinion should have some weight, but then he is prejudiced in the fair sinner's favour.

J. H. Peat and G. Day.

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BIG PRIZE SCHEME

For MARCH, 1901.

25,602 PRIZES, value £10,000

LIST OF PRIZES:

1	Cash Prize	£50 0
1	Cash Prize	£40 0
10	Handsome Pianos, in walnut, £40 each	400 0
5	Cash Prizes, £25 each	125 0
10	Gents' Bicycles, Freewheels, £17 17s.	178 10
10	Ladies' Bicycles, Freewheels, £17 17s.	178 10
10	Cash Prizes, £10 each	100 0
20	Jones's Sewing Machines, £8 each	160 0
20	Cash Prizes, £5 each	100 0
50	Rolled Gold Lever Watches, £2 10s. each	125 0
100	Cash Prizes, £2 each	200 0
50	Dinner Services (56 pieces), £2 each	100 0
50	Folding Bed Chairs, £2 each	100 0
50	Ladies' Travelling Trunks, £2 each	100 0
200	Cash Prizes, £1 each	200 0
200	Ladies' Leather Hatboxes, £1 each	200 0
100	Basket Arm Chairs, upholstered, £1	100 0
400	pairs Blankets, 15s. per pair	300 0
200	½-doz Electro-plated Forks, large, 15s. per ½ doz.	150 0
200	½-doz. Electro-plated Forks, small, 15s. per ½-doz.	£150 0
500	Ladies' Umbrellas, 15/- ea.	375 0
500	Gents' Umbrellas, 15s. each	375 0
400	Best Electro-plated Teapots, 15s. each	300 0
400	Handsome Meat Carvers, with Steel in Case, 15s. set	300 0
1000	Cash Prizes, 10s. each	500 0
1000	pairs Bed Sheets 10s. each	500 0
1000	White Linen Table Cloths, 10s. each	500 0
1000	Ladies' Umbrellas, 7/6 each	375 0
1000	Ladies' Leather Purses, 7/6 each	375 0
200	½-doz. Table Knives, 7/6 per ½-doz.	75 0
200	½-doz. Dessert do., 7/6 per ½-doz.	75 0
2000	Ladies' Dress Lengths, Navy Blue Serge, 7/6 each	750 0
2000	Cash Prizes of 5s each	500 0
4715	Ladies' Leather Handbags, 4s. each	943 0
4000	½ doz. Fine Linen Cambric Handkerchiefs, 2/6 per ½-doz.	500 0
4000	Handsome Work-boxes, 2/6 each	500 0
25,602		£10,000 0

CONDITIONS OF COMPETITION.

Every tablet of **Watson's Matchless Cleanser** is enclosed in a Wrapper, with signature up the centre of same. Save the WHOLE Wrapper (tops of Wrappers will be disqualified), and send, postage or carriage paid, to **Joseph Watson & Sons Limited, Whitehall Soap Works, Leeds,** not later than MARCH 31ST, 1901. Each package will be counted as one lot; separate entries must be sent under separate covers. If any parcel arrives, postage or carriage not being fully paid, such parcel will be refused. Be careful to see that the full postage is paid. Each parcel sent in must contain the full name and address of sender, and number of Wrappers sent in must be marked on the same paper. On outside of parcel write legibly "**Prize Competition.**" The prizes will be awarded in the above order to the senders of the highest numbers of Wrappers. A list, giving result of the Competition, will be sent with each prize when it is sent out. Every wrapper must have first contained soap. No employee of Joseph Watson & Sons Limited will be eligible. All prizes will be despatched about April 25th.

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FOOTBALL SKILL COMPETITION

£100 PRIZE AWARDED EVERY WEEK.

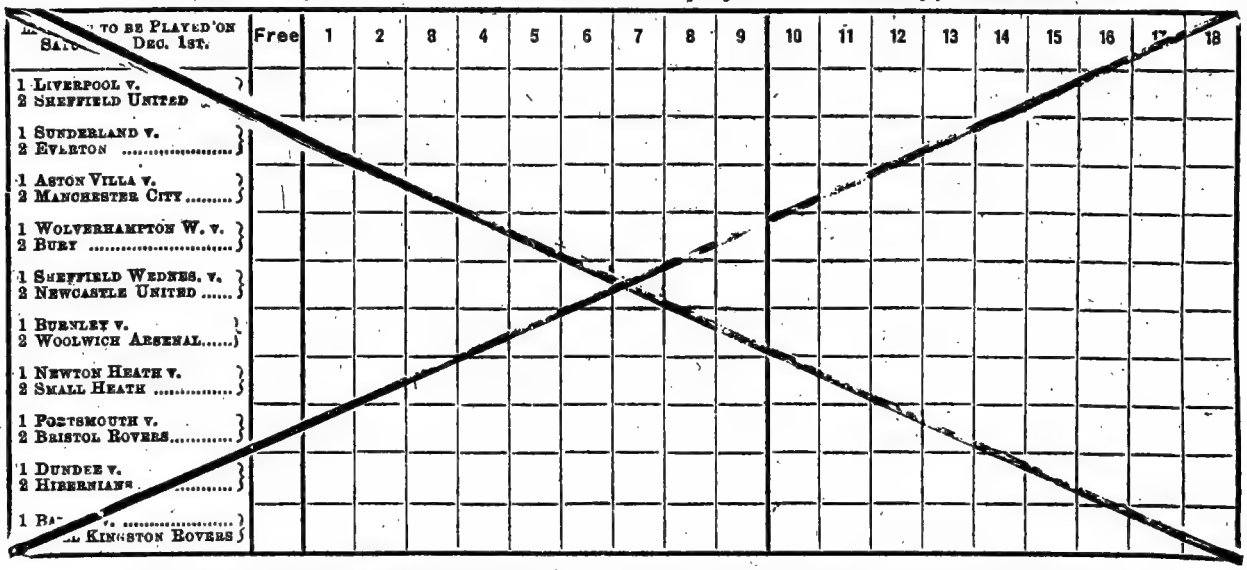
Result of Competition No. 5.

The following three competitors sent in the correct forecast of all the matches, and the £100 has consequently been divided between them, each receiving £33 6s. 8d.: F. GIRLING, Aldringham, near Saxmundham, Suffolk; S. A. SMITH, Campbell Villa, Campbell Road, Salisbury; D. W. MADGE, 27 Sutherland Avenue, London, W.

Notts Forest, Liverpool, Sunderland, Manchester City, Walsall, Woolwich Arsenal, and Southampton won their matches; the remainder were drawn games.

The football matches named below will be played on Saturday, December 1st. To the competitor from whom we receive the correct result of all these matches we will pay the sum of ONE HUNDRED POUNDS. If no competitor gives all the results correctly, the HUNDRED POUNDS will be awarded to the person or persons most nearly correct.

FOOTBALL COUPON No. 8. Matches to be played on Saturday, December 1st.



The clubs engaged in each match are numbered 1 and 2. To fill in the above coupon, insert in the space provided the number of the club selected to win. To predict a draw, put X. THE FIRST COUPON IS FREE. A penny stamp must be inclosed for each coupon used in addition to the free one. Nine extra coupons may be used for Sixpence, and eighteen extra coupons for One Shilling.

I send in this coupon as a competitor for the prize advertised in this paper, and subject to the conditions printed on this page:

Name and address.....

THINGS TO REMEMBER.

1. Coupons may be sent either from "Pearson's Weekly" or "Short Stories."
2. All coupons must reach us not later than Friday, November 30th, first post.
3. Competitors should cut out the whole coupon, score it as directed, put their name and address in the space provided, and send to "COUPON No. 8," Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.
4. All coupons are at senders' risk, and if they go astray, from whatever cause, we do not accept responsibility.
5. Competitors must attach their private address to their attempts. No prize will be sent to any post-office, refreshment rooms, or other places at which letters are called for. Attempts bearing such addresses will be disqualified.
6. In the event of a tie the prize will be divided.
7. Competitors may send in any number of attempts.
8. It must be taken as a condition of the competition that anybody competing therein agrees to abide by the Editor's final decision.

Intending competitors in the above would do well to procure a copy of "The Football Who's Who," which contains valuable information and statistics showing the previous records of the various clubs, and the particulars of the points of about a thousand of the best known players. This book will be found of great service in determining the chances of the teams engaged. It only costs a shilling, and may be obtained of all booksellers, and post free for 1s. 3d. from the Publisher, 17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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ANY DOCTOR WILL TELL YOU "there is no better Cough Medicine."—One gives relief if you suffer from cough try them but once they *will* cure, and they *will not* injure your health; an increasing sale of over 80 years is a certain test of their value. Sold in 1s.d. tins.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

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For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

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Every man suffering from Varicocele and the allied troubles, should send for treatise, describing their Causes, Symptoms, Results, and Successful and Painless Treatment without surgical operation or the use of cumbersome trusses and electrical appliances. Will be sent sealed, post free, three stamps.

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Works by hand or treadle. Guaranteed 4 years. Equal in quality and size to any machine To ensure satisfaction, we will send machine on receipt of 5/- P.O. for ONE MONTH'S TRIAL. Balance can be paid 5/- Monthly. Call or write for designs and Samples of work. **39/-**

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184s High St., Camden Town, London, N.W.,
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1,000 CYCLES.

1/6 1/6

FREE. FREE.

Our Ladies' or Gents' Link will be sent free of any charge for delivery on receipt of 1s. 6d. These are not American or foreign trash, but are made in England. This is our first advertisement, and by it we are determined to bring our name before the public, so this offer will only hold good to the readers of this paper for the next fourteen days. We will send with the bicycle a nickel silver lamp and pump, and the whole will be packed in a wood crate and sent to your address free, immediately you take advantage of this advertisement and the offer we will send. A written guarantee given with each bicycle. We give these machines away to encourage you to become agents for us If the bicycles are all given away your 1s. 6d. will be returned. Send 1s. 6d. and stamped addressed envelope for receipt. Address, the

London Direct Supply Company,
4 Duke St., Strand, London, W.C.
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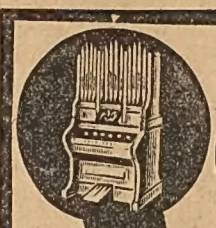

An Organ in Miniature!

WITH 2 FULL SETS OF REEDS, AND 3 BEAUTIFUL CONTROLLING STOPS.

All that the most finished musician can produce upon a 50 Guinea Piano or Organ may be produced upon the

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It is a marvel of ingenuity and construction and is an ideal musical instrument for the home. It requires no teaching,—

A CHILD . . CAN PLAY IT.

Perfectly simple, and cannot get out of order. Money returned if not satisfactory.

Also supplied on Easy Terms.

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Organette Works, **BLACKBURN**

J.M. DRAPER'S ORCHESTRAL ORGANETTE

THE MUSICAL MARVEL OF THE AGE,

35/-

Equal in value to a £4 4s. Instrument.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.**, Sole Proprietors, **66 Finsbury Pavement, London.**

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Walnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 2lb., and I am cured." Mrs. Darnley-Smith, of Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, says: "Tablets have reduced me very much." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

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The Brain Gymnasium.

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in, the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award, in addition to the above, either ten of our gold-plated pencil-cases or ten popular novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize; or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, December 10th, 1900.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 253.

Re-arrange the following letters so as to form a well-known proverb:

AAA BB DDD C H III LLL NNNN OOOOO SS TTT WW YY.

No. 254.

When re-arranged,

A full two-thirds of reckon; plus half of leek; three-fifths of Dewey; a half of mine; a sixth of Hughie,

will give a town in Yorkshire.

No. 255.

The initials and finals of equivalents of the following will give the names of two well-known Generals:

A measure; a fruit; a messenger of death; a period; a term in music and poetry; business; the answer.

No. 256.

My FIRST is myself,
An egotist quite;
My SECOND'S a wood
That is usually white.
My WHOLE is a state,
That most would admit;
My FIRST should make haste
And live up to it.

No. 257.

What word is that which, read forward, is a conveyance; backward, not the whole; and, beheaded, a sharp blow?

No. 258.

Form a word-square from equivalents of the following:

Part of a teapot; a gardening operation; a well-known novelist; beneath; indicative of grief.

Next week, an entirely new sort of Picture Competition will begin.

FOOTBALL WHO'S WHO.

Cloth, price 1s. net.

Post Free 1s. 3d.

Contains the biographies of nearly 1,000 of the best-known players, together with statistics and much general information relating to all the prominent Association Clubs. It gives information as to the various leagues, cups, and other trophies, rules, fixtures, etc., etc., and will be found invaluable to all followers of football.

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Black blocks are charged 25 per cent. extra. All advertisements are subject to approval. All copy must be sent in by Noon on Tuesday, Dec. 4th, if intended for the issue on sale Dec. 18th, and dated December 22nd. The Proprietors reserve the right to hold over or suspend the insertion of any advertisement without prejudice to other insertions on order. All communications should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "Pearson's Weekly" Offices, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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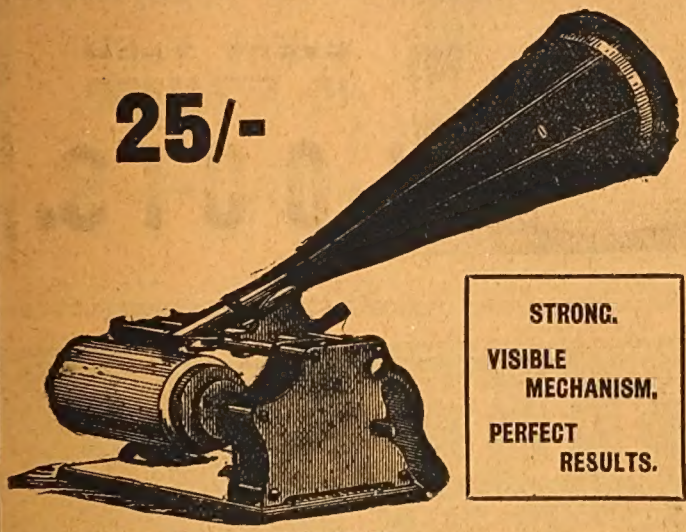
A GRAPHOPHONE FOR 25/-

25/-



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Reproduces Same Records as all Small Cylinder Talking Machines.

Makes Music in the Home, and is an Inexhaustible Source of Amusement and Pleasure.

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VISIBLE MECHANISM.
PERFECT RESULTS.

The pleasure in owning a Graphophone is largely increased by being able to make and reproduce your own records. The Graphophone will record your own voice as well as reproduce specially prepared records.

Graphophones are sold from 25s. upwards.

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A Treatise on the Modern and Successful Treatment of Nervous Diseases and Exhaustion, by local absorption.
Fully up to the advanced ideas on the subject.
THE MARSTON CO.,
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With a guarantee to keep correct time for three years, will be sent to any address on receipt of P.O. or stamps value 2/9 and three stamps extra for postage. To every purchaser during this month we give with it ABSOLUTELY FREE a strong Mexican SILVER CHAIN. All we ask of you is to show them to your friends, as by doing so you advertise our business.
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MORCHARD BISHOP, DEVON.

THE "GEO. R. SIMS"
HAIR RENEWER
"TATCHO"

"While you wait"

LARGE TRIAL BOTTLES TO-DAY.
1s. 6d.
Sent Post Free in plain package, twenty one stamps.

MRS. BROWN POTTER, whose beautiful hair is the envy of her sex, writes:
"I Use only 'TATCHO.'"
If your hair is falling or failing, you have your remedy. Don't hesitate. Use "TATCHO." The result will surprise you and will be intensely gratifying. It is sold in bottles by Chemists and Hairdressers allover the world, 2/9 and 5/-, or may be had direct in plain sealed package, post free, 2/11 and 5/3. Address:
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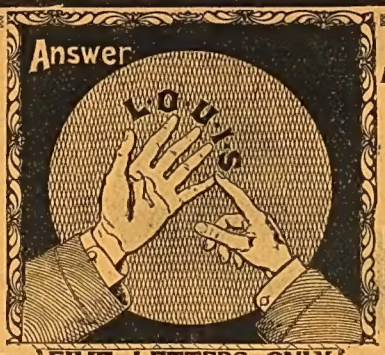
VELVETEEN?



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IF you approve of it you send us **3s. 6d.** on receipt, and **2s. 6d.** each month for 5 months, making the full **18s.** But

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